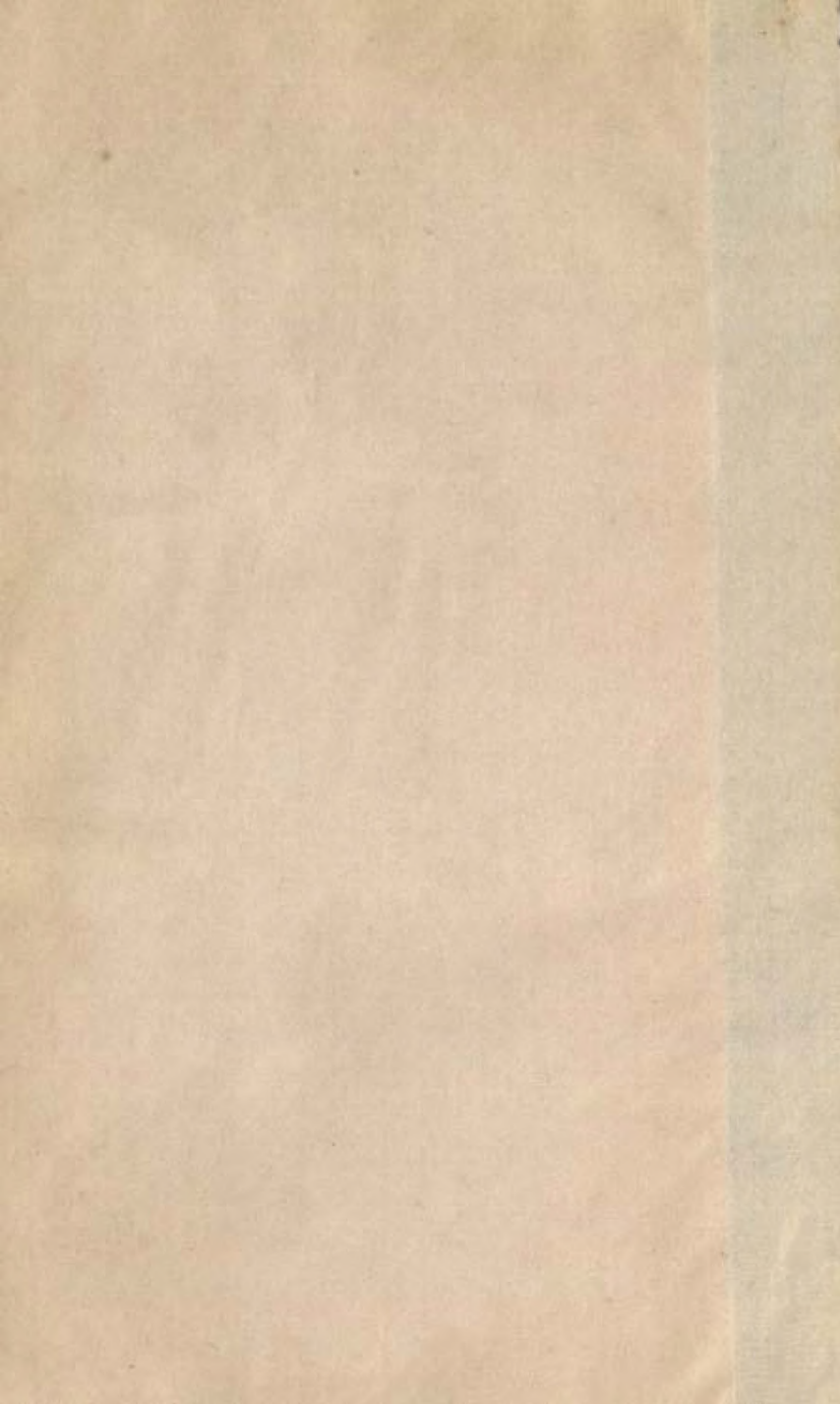


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MASTERPIECES
OF THE

RUSSIAN DRAMA

MASTERPIECES OF THE RUSSIAN DRAMA



SELECTED AND EDITED
WITH AN INTRODUCTION
BY GEORGE RAPALL NOYES

29218

Volume One

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DOVER PUBLICATIONS, INC.
NEW YORK NEW YORK

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PREFACE

THE purpose of this volume is to group together a dozen of the best Russian plays in such a way as to illustrate the historic development of the Russian drama, its scope and variety. The period covered is from 1782 to 1921. Four of the plays selected are comedies, five are tragedies, two are of the intermediate sort common in Russian literature, one is an extravaganza. Five deal with country life and five with city life in the time of their authors; one is an historical tragedy of the sixteenth century. Nine are in prose and three in verse.

With the exception of *Wit Works Woe*, the translations in this volume are here printed for the first time. *The Young Hopeful*, *The Poor Bride*, *A Bitter Fate*, *Professor Storitsyn*, and *Mystery-Bouffe* have never before been translated into English. When two or more translators are named for one play, the main credit belongs to the first mentioned; the others added merely corrections or suggestions on style. Unless otherwise stated, the notes throughout the book are by the translators. I am indebted to Mr. Arthur A. Sykes for his courteous permission to use his excellent translation of *The Inspector* (*The Inspector-General*, London, 1896) in revising a few passages of the present translation: some notes on the text are also taken from his work.

The translation of Griboyedov's masterpiece by Sir Bernard Pares appeared under the title *The Mischief of Being Clever* in the *Slavonic Review* (London) for June and December, 1924, and was later published separately by the School of Slavonic Studies, London. Sir Bernard Pares has kindly consented to its inclusion in the present volume under the title, *Wit Works Woe*, and has approved some trifling changes in the style of printing and in the text.

The Introduction aims to explain the main lines of the development of Russian drama in relation to Russian literature as a whole, with special reference to the plays here printed.

The following books have been of particular service to me in writing the Introduction: Wiener, *The Contemporary Drama of Russia* (Boston, 1924); Saylor, *The Russian Theatre* (New York, 1922); Carter, *The New Theatre and Cinema of Soviet Russia* (London, 1924), and *The New Spirit in the Russian Theatre, 1917-28* (New York, 1929);

Mirsky, *A History of Russian Literature* (New York, 1927), and *Contemporary Russian Literature* (New York, 1926); Grossman, *Turgenev* (in Russian: Moscow, 1928); Znosko-Borovsky, *The Russian Theatre* (in Russian: Prague, 1925); Gorbachev, *Sketches of Contemporary Russian Literature* (in Russian: Leningrad, 1925); Evgenyev-Maksimov, *Sketch of the History of Recent Russian Literature* (in Russian: Leningrad, 1925); Piskunov, *Griboyedov* (in Russian, in Ovsyaniko-Kulikovskiy, *History of Russian Literature of the Nineteenth Century*, Moscow, n.d.). Quotations from books in English are made by the kind permission of the publishers.

I am indebted to Professors G. Z. Patrick and A. Kaun for constant assistance in preparing this book; Professor Patrick has made particularly valuable suggestions for the Introduction. Finally, my greatest debt is due to my wife, who has aided me in all my work on the volume with tireless devotion.

G. R. NOYES.

Berkeley, California.

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MASTERPIECES
OF THE
RUSSIAN DRAMA

THE
LITERATURE OF
RUSSIA
FROM THE
MIDDLE AGES TO THE PRESENT

MASTERS
OF THE
RUSSIAN DRAMA

INTRODUCTION

THE drama has been one of the great glories of Russian literature, but it has never been the most important type of that literature. At no time has the theatre in Russia been the chief interest of men of letters, as it was in England, France, and Spain in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Nor have there been groups of writers devoting themselves exclusively to the drama, comparable to those in France during the nineteenth century, or in America in our own time. Among the major Russian writers only one man, Ostrovsky, has been a dramatist by profession. Aside from this author's work, the most significant Russian plays have been written by novelists and poets, such as Turgenev, Pisemsky, Chekhov, and the two Tolstoys, for whom the drama was only a part, and generally a subordinate part, of their literary work; or else, as in the case of Fonvizin and Griboyedov, by men of wit and sense, of general cultivation and social standing, for whom authorship was only an avocation. Hence in Russia, more than in most countries, the history of the drama has been merely a part of the history of literature in general. Dramatists wrote according to their own inclinations, not at the behest of theatrical managers, and were comparatively little influenced by traditions of stage technic.

Modern Russian literature, since its origin in the early eighteenth century, follows the same general course as that of other European countries. It grew to an early maturity under the influence of the French classical school that was dominant in Europe at the time. This influence prevailed in Russia until about 1820. From 1820 to 1840 came the brief period of Russian romanticism. From 1840 to 1890 the realistic school—the school of authors who first made Russian literature widely known outside its native country, the school that established the great and commanding claim of Russian literature to originality and distinction—reigned supreme. From 1890 to 1917 the realists were still the most important of Russian writers, but their position of leadership was no longer unchallenged. During these years there was a notable revival of Russian poetry, exhibiting the same tendencies that prevailed in western Europe: decadents of all sorts, symbolists, acmeists, futurists, became prominent. Symbolism and mysticism affected Russian prose as well as Russian poetry. Since 1917, under the Bolshevik régime, no new literary schools of any

importance have arisen; the characteristic note of the period is the domination of literature by Marxian propaganda.

Peter the Great (1682-1725) made Russia one of the European nations and laid the foundations for an educated upper class such as existed in the western countries. Before his time education in Russia was practically confined to the clergy, and it was education of the crudest sort, going back to Byzantine traditions. Russia was almost exclusively an agricultural country, composed of landowners, from whom were chosen all the civil officials and army officers, and of a vast multitude of serfs, who cultivated the estates of the landowners, waited upon them in their houses, and served in the army as private soldiers. The wealthier landlords owned houses in St. Petersburg or Moscow; from their families came the highest functionaries of the empire. The town classes proper, of merchants and artisans, were free personally, but counted for nothing in Russian society and administration. Education of a Western type, when it began to spread in eighteenth-century Russia, was an affair exclusively of the landed gentry. In the arts, and in *belles-lettres* in particular, Peter had small interest; he imported teachers and urged Russians to travel abroad for purely practical purposes, in order that he might have an efficient body of civil servants and military officers. But contact with Europe on the part of wealthy Russians inevitably brought with it an interest in European art and literature. This interest was fostered by the Empress Catherine II (1762-96), herself a woman of literary talent. During her reign a cultivated leisure class already existed in St. Petersburg and Moscow, and the reading habit had begun to spread among the rural aristocracy.

The literary interests of this new cultivated society in Russia were more French than Russian. French literary tastes and social conventions then prevailed throughout Europe. In Russia the ability to read and speak French became the distinguishing mark of a highly educated man or woman. Hence the nascent Russian literature was imitative of French forms and ideals. Since drama was a leading type of French literature, it became a leading type of Russian literature as well. The society of the Russian capitals could enjoy drama on the stage in their own language, but at home they read philosophy, history, and fiction in French.

During the eighteenth century French tragedy still held to the old Racine tradition, with its long tirades, high-flown sentiment, and predominantly classic subjects. By its very nature it was alien to the Russian genius, and imitation of it in Russia produced no literature of permanent value. With comedy the case was different. All over the world comedy in the eighteenth century was in general of the type

which had been brought to perfection in France by Molière, and which went back through him to Terence and Menander. The rules governing its construction were definite and rather simple. The plot must center about a love story between a young man and a young woman who, if not always admirable from a moral point of view, were at least intellectually gifted. This plot was, however, usually subordinated to a picture of society drawn in a satiric vein. Satire opened the door to didacticism; the comic writers prided themselves on being teachers of social good sense, a sort of practical morality. The great comic masters were preëminent in their drawing of types of character, the beau, the coquette, the miser, the prude. The tone of their works was intellectual, analytical; though they often wrote in verse, their language was rarely imaginative or poetic in the ordinary meaning of those words. Their subjects were contemporary and of their own nation; they were realists in tone if not in form. Finally, plays of this sort were constructed according to the "three unities," of action, time, and place: that is, the interest must be concentrated on a single plot, and that plot must take place within the space of twenty-four hours, and in one city, preferably within a single room.

Here was a dramatic formula that could be adapted to any country and to any period. If somewhat cramping to an author's individuality, it nevertheless admitted the widest variety of treatment. Russian writers, when they adopted it, had only to use Russian subjects in order to produce works of a thoroughly national character. To this dramatic school belong Fonvizin's *Young Hopeful* (1782), Griboyedov's *Wit Works Woe* (1823), and, to a certain extent, even Gogol's *Inspector* (1836).

Denis Ivanovich Fonvizin (1744-92) was the greatest Russian dramatist of the eighteenth century. In his work he is absolutely faithful to the French type, though he derived inspiration less from Molière than from the Danish dramatist Holberg. In his masterpiece, *The Young Hopeful*, he presents the traditional pair of lovers, Milon and Sofya, who are conventional and uninteresting. His genius lies in his pictures of life among the backward country squires, who had as yet been little affected by the European ideals of education that had made their way into the higher aristocracy. Their pig-headed obscurantism forms a contrast to the wisdom of Starodum (Mr. Oldsense), who combines European enlightenment with both business ability and a fidelity to homely Russian traditions of virtue and honesty. His discourses point the moral of the piece. But the greatness of the play is independent of his tedious didacticism; it consists in the satiric portraits: of Mme. Prostakov (Mrs. Simpleton) and her brother Skotinin (Mr. Beastly), of the grotesque tutors Kuteykin, CIPHERKIN, and Vralman

(Spree, Cipher, and Fibber), and above all of the booby Mitrofan, Mme. Prostakov's darling son. This "young hopeful" has become a figure even more famous in Russia than is Goldsmith's Tony Lumpkin in England. In his dramatic satire of middle-class society Fonvizin is surpassed only by Gogol.

By 1820 the influence of French style had definitely declined in Russian poetry, giving place to the ideals of the romantic school imported from Germany and from England. Pushkin (1799-1837), the greatest of all Russian poets, was in his mature work more affected by Byron and by Shakespeare than by any French writers; Lermontov (1814-41), the second great poet of the period, was a direct follower of Byron. But these two poets were supreme only in lyric and narrative verse; their dramas are of comparatively small account and have never held the stage in Russia, any more than have the dramas of Wordsworth and Coleridge, Byron and Shelley in England. The parallel between the two countries is striking. Lermontov's dramas are hardly mentioned in critical appreciations of his work. Pushkin's *Boris Godunov*, his most important play, which he intended for the stage, has survived there only in the operatic version by Musorgsky. It is a mere series of dramatic scenes, often brilliant, and containing magnificent poetry, but lacking internal cohesion. Later, Alexey Tolstoy, a poet of far less talent, was to write dramas concerning the same epoch in Russian history, and to win success where Pushkin had failed.

The one Russian drama of this period that gained a permanent position on the stage has no romantic flavor. *Wit Works Woe*, by Alexander Sergeyevich Griboyedov (1795-1829), is the best comedy of manners in Russian literature: it is high comedy, dealing with the foibles of Russian educated ladies and gentlemen; in topic and style it is comparable to Molière's *Misanthrope*. The characters are wealthy serf-owners, but we see them in their city environment, not on their estates. The love of the acute, intelligent, and tactless Chatsky for the selfish, cold-hearted beauty, Sophya, who herself is infatuated with the sly upstart Molchalin, is subordinated to a brilliant picture of drawing-room society. Chatsky in his eloquent tirades rebukes dishonesty and satirizes infatuation with French manners, but, like Molière's Alceste, he is himself ineffective, a talker, not a man of affairs; he accomplishes nothing, and is incapable even of inspiring affection. Famusov, the corrupt officeholder, represents the bureaucracy; Skalozub is a brainless army officer, the slave of routine; Repetilov is a member of a "progressive" circle nominally organized for the loftiest aims, but is himself a hopeless drunkard. The whole tone of the comedy is satiric, hardly touched by the ideal aspirations of the romantic movement; even Chatsky's enthusiasms are merely for common sense, com-

monplace honesty, and patriotic fidelity to the national ideals of Russia.

Griboyedov was true to the traditions of high comedy in writing his play in verse, but he wisely avoided the couplets of Molière, which are ill adapted to the genius of the Russian language. He adopted the irregular verse that had been used in France by La Fontaine, and in Russia by Krylov, for their fables, which are small masterpieces of satiric comedy. The long speeches by Chatsky and others are a survival from the technic of French comedy in the seventeenth century. Despite the use of them, Griboyedov in his sparkling dialogue gives an idealized reproduction of social wit. In both the form of his work and in its spirit he is a worthy pupil of Molière.

Owing to difficulties with the censorship, *Wit Works Woe*, though circulated extensively in manuscript, was neither published nor acted in a public theatre during the author's lifetime. A mutilated form of it was presented in 1831; it was not given as a whole until 1869. Since then it has constantly held the stage; it is the earliest Russian drama to gain such success. Not even the Bolshevik revolution has dimmed its popularity.

The romantic period in Russia was noteworthy primarily for its poetry. Russia had no prose writers worthy of comparison to Scott or to Chateaubriand. Pushkin's *Captain's Daughter* and Lermontov's *Hero of Our Time*, both of them very short works, are almost the only pieces of prose fiction written by leaders of the romantic school that won enduring fame. After a period of triumph more brief than in other countries, romantic poetry in Russia gave place to a realistic prose fiction that constitutes the greatest glory of Russian literature. Turgenev, Dostoyevsky, and Tolstoy were the first Russian authors to become widely known in western Europe; their writings are Russia's chief contribution to the literature of the world.

The founder of Russian realism is usually said to be Nikolay Vasilyevich Gogol (1809-52). Gogol is indeed the first Russian writer of commanding genius who concentrated his attention on small, commonplace themes, and on men and women of an undistinguished, vulgar sort. But he was not a realist in any strict sense of the word. He had certain romantic leanings; his *King of the Gnomes* is an excellent tale of the supernatural, and *Taras Bulba* is a stirring, though somewhat tawdry, story of war, adventure, and patriotism. But in his more characteristic work he is an artist in sentiment, satire, and caricature. He is sometimes compared to Dickens, whom he resembles in his command of humor and of pathos. But his work is more highly polished than that of Dickens; it is also less copious and far narrower in its interests. Gogol's creations are never well-rounded portraits; they are types, and types of a negative sort: swindlers, spendthrifts, lazy and

almost idiotic landowners. His masterpiece, *Dead Souls*, tells of the journey of a grafter through Russia, and of the fragments of humanity whom he meets upon his way; it is not a novel in any strict sense of the term. Gogol gives no complete representation of humanity, no view of men and women in normal social relations. Yet even his exaggeration is of a petty sort; exalted virtue and heavy villainy are alike absent from his work. Love played no part in his life, and the sex element is almost absent from his writings. His women are hardly more than puppets; among his men there is no figure of intellectual distinction. Of psychology he knew nothing; he gained his effects by description of external traits and happenings, by the account of the impressions that his characters make on one another, and by the skillful handling of commonplace conversation.

Such was the genius who wrote the best of all Russian comedies, *The Inspector*. It is a satiric comedy, an attack on Russian graft and dishonesty. The scene is laid among the officials of a small country town. In Gogol's time city administration was subject to the control of the central government, which appointed local functionaries and sent out inspectors to control their behavior. These inspectors were as susceptible to bribes as the officials whom they controlled. Once Pushkin, the great poet, when tarrying in a small town, was mistaken for such an inspector. He told Gogol of the incident; Gogol seized on the situation and developed it into a comic masterpiece. In technic he followed the French tradition; the love story is still present, though it has sunk into insignificance. More important, by observing the unities of time and place Gogol lends a concentrated vigor to his comic action. But there is nothing traditional about the substance of the play; there is no conventional moralizing as in Fonvizin, no long, well-rounded tirades as in Griboyedov. Gogol's art is apparent in his arrangement of a series of scenes, each in itself intensely farcical, which lead up to a dénouement more ridiculous than anything that has preceded. The conversation is the lumbering, occasionally shrewd talk of witless men. As *Wit Works Woe* is the greatest intellectual, witty comedy in Russian literature, so *The Inspector* is the humorous masterpiece of the Russian drama. With good reason it became part of the repertoire of every Russian theatre and has constantly held the stage until the present day.

Gogol's work in fiction and the drama ended in 1842. After him came the great writers of the realistic school, who dominated Russian literature for the fifty years that followed. They are the novelists Turgenev, Dostoyevsky, and Lev Tolstoy, and, of somewhat less fame, Goncharov and Pisemsky, and the dramatist Ostrovsky. In general these men presented the society about them with a realistic truth, and an imaginative sympathy, such as have not been surpassed by the

writers of any nation. In temperament and in technic they vary greatly, but in one trait they are all distinguished from Gogol: they do not specialize in satiric exaggeration; they are realists, not caricaturists.

Alexander Nikolayevich Ostrovsky (1823-86) has a peculiar position in Russian literature as the only great author who was a dramatist by profession, and as the only author who dealt primarily with the middle or lower middle class of the Russian cities, with the merchants and petty officials. He was the son of a humble Moscow lawyer who practiced among the merchants; he himself served for eight years as a clerk of the Commercial Court. He won his fame by dramas based on the life of the social classes with which he had himself been associated. The merchants of Russia were in a far different social position from those of America or of England. They were without education, culture, or political importance, and were sharply distinguished from the landed aristocracy from whom the Russian "intelligents" were for the most part derived. By reputation they were greedy and dishonest, domineering and tyrannical; on the other hand they had a rough vigor not characteristic of their more polished countrymen, and in their better representatives one could find a simple, genial kindness. Their associates in the cities were petty lawyers and petty civil functionaries, as remote from the life of the Russian aristocracy as were the tradesmen themselves.

On the life of these classes Ostrovsky based the greater number of his forty-one prose plays. With him the traditions of the French classical school entirely disappear. In his earlier and more characteristic pieces the plot is of less importance than the single episodes that compose it. His skill lies in the presentation of situations—sometimes comic, sometimes tragic—that delighted the Russian public by their truth to everyday reality. His comedy is of a genial, somewhat sentimental type, not distinguished either by wit or by incisive satire. Only occasionally does he reach tragic heights. In his masterpiece, *The Thunderstorm* (1860), he depicts a poetic, pure-souled girl, driven first to adultery and then to suicide by the cruelty and crudity of the merchant family into which she has been forced to marry. His pieces are apt to be of a nondescript sort, neither pure comedy nor pure tragedy. He had no philosophic insight into life's problems comparable to that of Turgenev, Dostoyevsky, and Tolstoy; his morality is that of simple kindheartedness and charity. He excels above all by his ability to present atmosphere on the stage, the atmosphere of the simple, unreflecting Russian life that surrounded him. In his later years he altered his methods somewhat; in plays such as *Wolves and Sheep* (1875) he handles his plot in a careful fashion that shows the influence of French models. During his own lifetime Ostrovsky was

without a rival among Russian dramatists; his eminence was recognized by his appointment in 1886 as part-director of the Moscow Imperial Theatres. And although his reputation declined somewhat with the passing of the social conditions on which his work was based, and with the coming of a time when Russian taste was no longer fascinated by simple realism, his dramas have never ceased to hold a prominent position in the repertoires of the Russian theatres. Even since the Bolshevik revolution he has retained his popularity; though he himself had no revolutionary leanings, his caustic delineation of the trading classes has made him dear to the proletariat. But his fame has remained almost purely local; translations of his dramas have had small success in western Europe or in America.

The Poor Bride (1852) is among Ostrovsky's most famous dramas, and has been chosen for this collection instead of the more powerful *Thunderstorm*, since that work is already easily accessible to English readers and is moreover less characteristic of the author's general temper. The themes of the two plays are somewhat similar; in each a pure, idealistic girl is crushed by her environment. Marya in *The Poor Bride* finds herself surrounded by weaklings; no one of the young men about her has a spark of true manliness. In desperation she sacrifices herself for the sake of her mother, marrying a dishonest, dissolute, drunken official. The fifth act of the play, superficially planless, yet filled with suggestions of coming misery, is in Ostrovsky's best vein.

Of the great novelists, Dostoyevsky and Goncharov wrote no dramas, nor was their technic of a dramatic sort. Adaptations of Dostoyevsky's novels, such as *Crime and Punishment* and *The Brothers Karamazov*, have been successful on the stage, but that success is due to the skill of the adapter and to the fame of the novelist rather than to any truly dramatic qualities in Dostoyevsky's own text.

Turgenev, Pisemsky and Lev Tolstoy all wrote for the theatre. These novelists, however different in temperament and talent, had one trait in common: they all sprang from the rural nobility and wrote of the life of their own social station. With Goncharov, they are the chief representatives of the "landed proprietor school" in Russian literature. They were members of the dominant class in Russia and represented its social life and its intellectual interests.

Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev (1818-83) came of a well-to-do family in central Russia. He studied at the University of Moscow, then graduated from the University of St. Petersburg, and afterwards continued his work in Berlin. A large part of his later life was spent in France. His intellectual interests were always quick and keen; from the point of view of general mental cultivation he was among the best educated Russians of his time. In his youth he planned to become

a teacher, a man of learning; a professorship of philosophy at the University of Moscow was the height of his ambition.

But Turgenev's true vocation was literature. As a writer he was rather slow in discovering the medium of expression best adapted to his genius. As a boy he wrote verse; one of his early pieces is a romantic drama, *Steno*, written under the inspiration of the philosophic dramas of Byron. Then he longed to be a dramatist, and the regenerator of the Russian stage. He experimented with imitations of dramatic types popular in France and Germany. One short piece, *Lack of Caution*, was suggested by the pseudo-Spanish plays of Mérimée. *Lack of Funds*, *Lunch with the Marshal of the Nobility*, and *A Conversation on the Highway* are vaudeville comedies. Next, prompted by the work of Alfred de Musset, he wrote "dramatic proverbs": *Cloth Tears where it is Thin*, *A Provincial Lady*, and *An Evening in Sorrento*. But his best work for the theatre was in the psychological drama, to which belong *The Parasite*, *The Bachelor*, and *A Month in the Country*.

A Month in the Country, Turgenev's masterpiece in the drama, was written in 1848-50, under the immediate influence of Balzac's melodrama, *The Stepmother* (*La marâtre*). From that play Turgenev took the central situation, the rivalry between a young married woman and a girl for the love of a young man: in Balzac, a factory employee; in Turgenev, a student tutor. He even appropriated minor characters, the doctor and the young son of the heroine, and retained certain details of the plot, such as the card-playing that serves as the background of one of the love scenes. But he transformed Balzac's melodrama, which ends in a double suicide, into a domestic comedy, which concludes with a rather forced return of the erring wife to the path of virtue. And, what is most important, he gave the comedy a Russian setting, Russian atmosphere, and Russian characters. The intrigue and the types of character in *A Month in the Country* are of essentially the same sort that lie at the foundation of Turgenev's masterly series of novels, beginning with *Rudin* (1856) and ending with *Virgin Soil* (1876); in *Virgin Soil* Turgenev even repeated the central situation of his drama.

A change seems to have come over the life of the Russian landed gentry since the time of Fonvizin; European influences have penetrated into the Russian countryside. Turgenev shows us a gentle, kindly society, living in opulence, supported by the labor of serfs. The social tone might be that of a well-bred family of planters in the Old South of the United States. Turgenev was well aware of the oppression and cruelty of which his own class could be guilty towards their serfs; he treated of it frankly enough in some of his short tales, as *Mumu* and certain of the *Sportman's Sketches*, but in his dramas and his novels he was silent on the topic.

With *A Month in the Country* Turgenev concluded his work for the Russian theatre. He had won small fame by his dramas; up to 1852 only five of them had appeared on the public stage, and none of them had been brilliantly successful. He himself was dissatisfied with them. When in 1854 he published *A Month in the Country*, he called it a story in dramatic form, not suited for the stage, and stated that he had never intended it for that purpose. In the meantime, during the years 1847-51, he had acquired a leading position among Russian authors by his series of short stories, *A Sportman's Sketches*. It is no wonder, then, that he abandoned his hopes of a career as a dramatist and henceforth devoted himself to the narrative form. His novels established his fame as one of the three great masters of Russian fiction; in western Europe he became known more promptly than his great rivals Dostoyevsky and Tolstoy. But these novels owe much to his apprenticeship as a writer of plays; of all Russian novels they are the most dramatic in texture. Each deals with a brief episode in the life of a man and a woman, a love story that rarely ends happily. Each of them presents a very small number of characters, whom Turgenev makes stand out in vivid relief mainly by means of brief, pungent conversations, not passionate, yet packed with meaning. Each novel, one may repeat, is a drama of cultivated Russian life of the same sort as *A Month in the Country*. But the novels add to this dramatic presentation of the lives of men and women a certain analysis of Russian social and political movements. *Fathers and Children* (1862), for example, depicts the period of nascent "nihilism," or materialistic skepticism; *Smoke* (1867) shows the disenchanting, aimless condition of Russian society during the period when the emancipation of the peasants and other great reforms proved not to have brought the results hoped of them. Through this treatment of social questions in his novels Turgenev became a force of some moment in the development of Russian public ideals.

Time brings curious, often capricious alterations in literary reputations, and Turgenev is no exception to the rule. Since 1900 his fame as a novelist has distinctly declined. The social background of *Fathers and Children* and the rest of his novels has ceased to be of compelling interest. More important, his delicate analysis of young love has lost ground in favor of the uncanny skill of his contemporary, Dostoyevsky, who proved to be a forerunner of modern abnormal psychology. On the other hand, Turgenev's dramas have proved to be of more moment than they seemed to be on their first appearance. During Turgenev's lifetime they slowly acquired a position on the Russian stage and were presented by distinguished actors in France and Germany. (Here Turgenev is an interesting contrast to Ostrovsky, whose prestige in his

own country was unquestioned, but who was almost unknown outside of it.) After 1900 their position became even more secure; Turgenev with his delicate art was recognized as a predecessor of Chekhov. The fortune of *A Month in the Country* is a striking illustration of the change in the attitude of critics and of the public toward Turgenev's dramas. The play was not acted until 1872, eighteen years after it had appeared in print. But when revived in 1909 by the Moscow Art Theatre, it was among the distinguished triumphs of that great company. Twenty years later it again proved its worth in an environment as totally alien to Russia as New York.

The picture of Russian life in *A Bitter Fate* (1859), by Alexey Feofilaktovich Pisemsky (1820-81) is of a wholly different sort from that given by Turgenev in *A Month in the Country*. Though, in contrast to Turgenev, he never crossed the boundaries of Russia, and was narrowly Russian in his interests and his training, Pisemsky was in spirit more akin to Zola and other French naturalists than to the great Russian writers. He was harsh of temper, dwelt on the seamy side of life, and had small sympathy with his own creations; like Ostrovsky he lacked philosophic insight into human motives. His intellect was of a commonplace sort; his ideal was the common sense of the Russian "average man." His genius lay in his ability to construct an absorbing plot, and in his accurate, almost impersonal observation of the men and women about him. His chief interest was in sex questions. He knew only too well the weaknesses of the Russian educated or half-educated gentry; the peasants he also knew well, but he found in them no such vein of imagination, moral elevation, or latent intellectual power as appealed to Turgenev and Tolstoy. His novels, of which the most famous is *A Thousand Souls* (1858), are pessimistic in tone and show no enthusiasm for the ideal aspirations of Russian society that were so dear to Turgenev.

The atmosphere of Pisemsky's dramas is of the same sort. *Usurpers of Law*, for example, deals with the coarse tyranny and unbridled passions of Russian provincial grandees in the eighteenth century. *A Bitter Fate*, which in artistic merit is the best of all his works, is based on country life in his own period. It is a drama of a time that is now a thing of the past, of serfdom and of Russian patriarchal traditions. A Russian proprietor intrigues with the young wife of one of his serfs: the squire is lord of the serf; the serf is lord of his wife. The situation, as Pisemsky himself explains in the course of the play, was common enough, and would ordinarily have been settled by the proprietor's paying money to the aggrieved husband. But in this case the proprietor really loves the serf woman; she loves him and hates her husband, to whom she has been married against her will. The

husband is a man of vigor and of violent temper, who refuses to submit tamely to injury. The squire is a weakling, but he represents a social order that is still strong. A sordid tragedy results. The husband slays the child born to his wife and the proprietor, and is sent to Siberia; bribery hushes up the part played by the proprietor in the affair: of the later life of the proprietor and the serf woman we can only guess. Pisemsky states the situation with grim power, but he fails to lend it any universal significance such as is characteristic of the works of the greatest tragic writers. In this aspect of his art he is far inferior to Lev Tolstoy in *The Power of Darkness*, or even to Ostrovsky in *The Thunderstorm* and *The Poor Bride*.

The greatest of all Russian authors was Count Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy (1828-1910). He was a member of the highest Russian nobility; his experience of life, in society drawing-rooms, in the army, as a landed proprietor, as a teacher of village schools, and as a workman with peasants on his estate, was unusually broad and comprehensive. In his two vast novels, *War and Peace* (1863-69) and *Anna Karenin* (1873-77), he interprets human existence with a realism, an understanding, and a sympathy such as has not been equaled by any other writer of fiction. Yet no reader of those novels would think that their author's talent was adapted to dramatic composition. Not to speak of the loose, unconventional construction of Tolstoy's plots, the conversation of his men and women, like that of most men and women in real life, is slight and inconsequential; in itself it gives small indication of their personalities. Tolstoy makes us acquainted with his characters by describing their outward appearance, telling of their acts, great and—much more often—small, or by revealing their secret meditations. In his great love story, *Anna Karenin* and Vronsky do not discourse to each other of their mutual affection; they speak commonplace words on commonplace topics: Tolstoy emphasizes their mode of utterance rather than their utterances. A drama pieced together literally out of *Anna Karenin* would be for the most part a series of stage directions.

Nevertheless, Tolstoy even in his youth was interested in the drama; Molière was always one of his favorite authors. But his only important experiment in dramatic composition previous to his religious conversion was a farce-comedy, *A Contaminated Family*, written in 1863 and satirizing the nihilist enthusiasms of the youth of the period. It is a crude work, which never reached the stage; Tolstoy himself soon lost interest in it and wisely refrained from printing it. Its posthumous publication has added nothing to his fame.

In 1879 Tolstoy underwent a religious conversion, and during the following years spent his energies in formulating a religious and moral

system of which the cardinal principle was non-resistance to evil by violence. His new interests affected his mode of writing as well as his mode of life. In his earlier works he had been objective and copious, setting down all aspects of existence as they presented themselves to him: *War and Peace* impresses casual readers as disorganized and chaotic. After his conversion his first care was to express his moral views in orderly form; his work became concentrated, sometimes almost laconic. This exercise in compression inevitably affected his methods when he returned to the writing of fiction. *The Death of Ivan Ilyich* (1886), his first realistic story written after his conversion, is technically his most perfect work; with matchless power it analyzes the mental agony of a commonplace Philistine lawyer face to face with death, and his final glimpse of a new moral ideal. It seems incredible that this tale of suffering came from the man who in *War and Peace* had told of Natasha's bubbling joy of life. In *The Power of Darkness*, written in the same year, he displayed a similar genius for concentration. And in this tragedy he suddenly acquired the art of portraying character and situation through brief, pungent dialogue.

Tolstoy's religion had taught him the loveliness of a life illumined by religious faith and moral fervor; on this he discourses eloquently in *My Religion* and other books. But in his artistic writings he never succeeded in creating living men who should embody his new ideal; his attempts to do so in *Resurrection* and *The Light Shineth in Darkness* are feeble and groping. On the other hand he now portrays with uncanny insight the horrors of the worldly life untouched by faith. Furthermore, Tolstoy's religion had been derived in large measure from the inspiration of the Russian peasants. Yet *The Power of Darkness*, a drama of purely peasant life, is a grim tragedy of lust and murder. A strong, handsome farmhand, Nikita, intrigues both with the wife of his sickly employer Petr and with her half-witted stepdaughter Akulina. Egged on by his fiendish mother Matrena, he murders the babe born to Akulina. The episode of the burial of the babe ranks with the sleep-walking scene in *Macbeth*. The horror is conveyed to us through the talk of the kind-hearted laborer Mitrich, who vaguely understands what is going on, and of the child Anyuta, who still more dimly senses something evil. Woman in the tragedy is a force leading to crime; old Matrena is the personification of wickedness. In opposition to her, her husband, the senile cesspool-cleaner Akim, is the representative of the religious life. Akim triumphs: his son Nikita, the lustful murderer, proves not wholly depraved; his conscience stirs within him and he confesses his crime. Nor is this confession artificial, dragged in for a didactic purpose; it harmonizes with the whole spirit of the tragedy. Such revulsions of feeling do occur in human nature,

and Tolstoy knows well how to portray them; he is supreme in his presentation of moral aspiration, if not of moral achievement. As a whole, *The Power of Darkness* is the greatest tragedy of Russian literature, and ranks among the great tragedies of all time.

Tolstoy's other dramas need be mentioned only briefly. *The Fruits of Culture* (1889) illustrates the jovial, kindly nature that survived in the elderly Tolstoy, however overshadowed by his militant Puritanism and his absorption in his moral mission. Written for his children to perform at private theatricals, it is a genial satire on cultivated society, full of comic verve. Two serious plays, *A Living Corpse* and *The Light Shineth in Darkness*, remained unfinished at Tolstoy's death. The first, a presentation of the familiar type of the ne'er-do-well who retains elements of nobility, has marked power; the second, in which the hero is a fairly close copy of the author himself, is one of the few works by Tolstoy that fail of artistic success. Tolstoy does not succeed in making his double tragic, or even pathetic; as has been said, he was never able to create a vivid personality who should exemplify his own religious and moral ideals.

The long life of Lev Tolstoy includes the entire period of the rise, flourishing, and incipient decline of Russian realism. But the romantic spirit was not extinguished in Russia, any more than in England, by the predominance of the realistic school; its most prominent representative during the central years of the nineteenth century was Count Alexey Konstantinovich Tolstoy (1817-75), a distant kinsman of the great novelist. Alexey Tolstoy came of a wealthy family and lived all his life in court circles. As a poet he won fame by his ballads, his lyrics, and his humorous verse. Inspired by the example of Sir Walter Scott, he wrote a notable historical novel, *Prince Serebryany*, dealing with the epoch of Ivan the Terrible (1533-84).

For a romantic writer, seeking the picturesque elements in the history of his country, the period of Ivan the Terrible and the "time of troubles" that immediately followed are the most fascinating years in all Russian annals. They lend themselves readily to treatment in the drama. From them Pushkin drew the plot of his *Boris Godunov*, which, as has been said, proved to be a failure as an acting drama. Ostrovsky, deserting his native vein of homely realism, found in them the material for three chronicle plays in blank verse. Alexey Tolstoy succeeded where Pushkin and Ostrovsky failed. His historical trilogy, *The Death of Ivan the Terrible*, *Tsar Fedor Ivanovich*, and *Tsar Boris*, won a permanent place on the Russian stage. In our own time the Moscow Art Theatre has made the second play familiar to Western audiences. At an earlier period Richard Mansfield gained fame by his presentation of *The Death of Ivan the Terrible*. That drama, translated in this

volume, gives notable portraits of Ivan and of Boris Godunov, composed, it is true, more by intellectual reasoning than by imaginative insight. Despite its loose construction and its somewhat rhetorical tone, Alexey Tolstoy's work has genuine tragic power; a sense of coming calamity for Russia pervades the piece.

The decade from 1880 to 1890, in itself relatively sterile, marked the opening of a new period in Russian letters. Dostoyevsky died in 1881, Turgenev in 1883; Tolstoy for a time seemed to have abandoned artistic work, and, when he resumed it, he wrote in a spirit different from that of *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenin*. Meanwhile changes in Russian society became manifest. After the emancipation of the serfs in 1863, the landed gentry, the dominant class of the country, had gradually declined in economic prosperity and even in political importance. Many proprietors were on the brink of ruin; their estates were slowly passing into the hands of parvenu tradesmen. The reign of Alexander III (1881-94) and the early years of that of Nicholas II (1894-1917) were a period of stagnation in Russian internal politics. The enthusiasm for reform that had pervaded Russian society under Alexander II (1855-81) seemed to have died away; cultivated Russians discussed only petty personal interests instead of social questions. On the other hand, manufacturing made great strides during the closing years of the nineteenth century, and numbers of the peasants became factory laborers. Leaving their homes, they took up work in the cities, where they lived as transients, still retaining a connection with their native villages, where they paid their taxes. Tramp workmen swarmed over the country. This new laboring class was excellent material for socialistic propaganda of a Marxian type, which ultimately brought about the Russian revolution.

Two writers, Chekhov and Gorky, most truly represent the changing social order in Russia.

Anton Pavlovich Chekhov (1860-1904), the grandson of a serf, and a physician by training, wrote of the lives of the educated middle class of Russia during the gray epoch of the closing decades of the nineteenth century. He is the great master of the short story in Russia; his longer narratives are less successful. In his tales he is sometimes humorous, with a truly American delight in situations of an exaggeratedly ludicrous sort, but his humor always has an undertone of bitterness. In his serious work he deals in sordid pathos and grim tragedy. His characters are flabby and inert in their mental and moral constitution, persons who have either failed in life or whose outward success has brought them no inward peace and happiness. The soul-probing of Dostoyevsky and the moral fervor of Tolstoy are absent from his work; of the tender idealism of Turgenev little remains. His

genius lies in his ability to interest readers in the comedy and tragedy of petty, undistinguished lives. Whether he himself shows any sympathy with the nerveless or neurasthenic men and women whom he presents so skillfully in his drab tales is a point on which critics have been unable to agree. In his serious narratives he is nearly always purely realistic, rarely indulging in symbolism.

Chekhov's dramatic work is of two sorts. His short farces are of the same general nature as his humorous stories. They are excellent in their own way; *The Proposal* and *The Bear*, for example, were presented in almost every theatre in Russia and have given amusement, whether in professional or in amateur productions, to countless audiences in western Europe and in America. But there is nothing distinctly novel in their technic.

On the other hand, in the four plays on which his fame as a serious dramatist depends, *The Seagull*, *The Three Sisters*, *Uncle Vanya*, and *The Cherry Orchard*, Chekhov was an innovator, using methods very different from those of previous Russian dramatists. His men and women are of the same hopelessly ineffective sort as in his tales: they are neither actively good nor actively bad; among them are no heroes and no villains. As a necessary consequence, the dramatic interest does not lie in the conflict of aggressive individualities or in the march of events; the characters merely drift aimlessly from one situation to the next. They do not grapple with any moral problems—hence Tolstoy's vigorous condemnation of Chekhov's dramatic work; even when they commit suicide they merely drift into the act rather than resolve to kill themselves. As in the stories, the literary value depends on the skill with which Chekhov creates an atmosphere and makes the reader understand his unfortunate creations; the interest is in the social background rather than in the individual man or woman. But between the stories and the dramas there is a marked difference. Chekhov's dramas, though written in prose, are pervaded by a delicately poetic tone that is rarely found in his narratives. This tone is that of elegiac poetry, not that of the poetic comedy or tragedy of Shakespeare and other dramatists. It is reinforced by Chekhov's frequent use of a musical accompaniment to the action. And with it goes a use of symbols such as is found in Ibsen and other modern dramatists. Chekhov's serious dramas are never grotesque; they make no such sordid impression as his tales. Of Chekhov's dramatic art his masterpiece, *The Cherry Orchard* (1904), is a superb illustration.

In *The Cherry Orchard* we are once more in the company of the Russian gentry with whom Turgenev and Pisemsky have made us acquainted. But we have no longer the prosperous and happy class of landed proprietors that forms the background of *A Month in the*

Country. Chekhov's aristocrats have lost their grip on life; they are drifting, materially, to bankruptcy and beggary, while spiritually they are already bankrupts and beggars. They have no future before them; they have no force of character: their inability to meet a simple economic problem by renting their estate is a token of their moral weakness. The cherry orchard, which still bears lovely blossoms, but no marketable fruit, is a symbol of its proprietress and her kinsfolk. Nothing happens in the play: a family comes home from a trip to France, and is forced to leave once more when the ancestral estate is sold at auction. There are love affairs, but none of them will lead to lasting happiness. The one vigorous character in the drama is the merchant Lopakhin, who, after making futile efforts to save the proprietress from ruin, buys the cherry orchard for himself and starts to fell the trees—a symbol of the passing of the old order. But even Lopakhin has only business sense, no true ideal of life; he cannot rouse himself to declare his affection for the girl whom he loves.

The Cherry Orchard is a drama—whether it be comedy or tragedy is a question—of situation and mood, not of action. Its excellence lies in the supreme skill with which every dialogue, every aimless speech, each exclamation, is made to contribute to the sense of futility that pervades the piece. In the first act the family comes home after midnight and does nothing but go to bed. The second act is a scene of evening twilight, emphasized by the musical accompaniment. In the third act the jangling orchestra at the evening party, a senseless parody of those of bygone days, reinforces the impression of failure and of approaching ruin. In the fourth act the family depart after their cheerless visit to their home; the blow of a workman's ax against the trunk of a cherry tree takes the place of the musical accompaniment. That such a drama as this should have won success not only in Russia but in action-loving England and America is a proof of its superb technic.

Maxim Gorky (pseudonym for Alexey Maximovich Peshkov, born in 1869) rose to fame by the short stories which he published during the last decade of the nineteenth century. In temperament, and in the subjects of his most original and most successful compositions, he was a striking contrast to Chekhov. Chekhov dealt almost entirely with the decaying "intelligentsia," people of the educated middle class. By nature he was gentle to the point of inertia, with no trace of the revolutionist about him. Gorky, for the first time in Russian literature, centered his attention on artisans and common laborers, and above all on the tramps and vagabonds who formed the lowest level of the laboring classes in Russia. He based his tales on his own experience and observation. The son of an upholsterer, he had the scantiest regular

education; during his youth he was a vagabond, and all his life until the revolution of 1917 he was in rebellion against the established social order of Russia. His stories, with their background of sordid grime, and their tone of buoyant optimism, struck a new note in Russian literature. Characters such as Chelkash and Orlov are indeed failures in life, but they are nevertheless men of character and capacity; their failure has been caused by evil conditions for which they are not responsible, and against which they rebel. They have strength, even though their strength be misdirected. Gorky despises the peasants, so idealized by Tolstoy and Turgenev; to him they seem mere slaves of routine. His characters grope, however ineffectively, for a higher and finer existence, while Chekhov's men and women merely vegetate and decline.

So much for Gorky's tales. With his dramas the case is otherwise. His fame as a dramatist rests on but one play, *Down and Out* (1902). (The Russian title is literally *At the Bottom*.) And in *Down and Out* Gorky, the apostle of vigor and rebellion, adopts a technic that is essentially the same as that of the inert Chekhov, and is without doubt imitated from him. Gorky had been encouraged in his literary career by Chekhov; and when he turned to the drama, a form of art not native to his own genius, he was inevitably affected by the work of his friend, who was without a peer among Russians then writing for the theatre. In *Down and Out* a group of outcasts are gathered in a filthy lodging house, where they talk and philosophize on the world. Despite their fallen condition, most of them still retain some illusions concerning their own powers; the actor still dreams of recovery from drunkenness and of triumph on the stage, the prostitute Natasha cherishes her faith in a pure, ennobling love. As the play progresses, each poor creature loses his illusion. The wandering pilgrim Luka—a Tolstoyan figure—preaches words of love and kindness, but proves futile in the time of stress. The play ends in utter dejection and misery. Like Chekhov's plays, *Down and Out* is static, dealing with character and situation, not with action. Gorky's outcasts indulge in disconnected, aimless speeches that much resemble those of Chekhov's intellectuals. Yet the emotional effect of the play is entirely different from that of *The Cherry Orchard*. In Chekhov the pathos depends on the fact that people of refinement, of cultivated traditions, of delicate feelings, have no energy and are condemned to ruin. In Gorky one feels an atmosphere of hope, in that men and women who are literally "at the bottom" still retain a vein of idealism, that they have not been utterly crushed by their environment. Their words alternate between coarse abuse and poetic aspiration; at the very end of the grim drama the card-sharper Satin is sincere in his harangue on the dignity of man.

Gorky's other plays, such as *The Petty Bourgeois* (1900) and *Summer Folk* (1905), are based on the life of the middle classes, in the presentation of which he shows no such talent as in picturing the existence of the submerged tenth. In them also the influence of Chekhov's technic is apparent. But Gorky lacked the genius of his master. Except for *Down and Out*, his dramas suffer from the one unpardonable literary sin; despite an occasional well-drawn character or vivid situation, as a whole they are dull and tiresome.

Since the death of Chekhov in 1904 Russia has been less notable for its dramatists than for its actors and theatrical managers. During the nineteenth century the state theatres had dominated the Russian stage. In the present century the dramatic art has been regenerated by independent companies. Of these the most distinguished has been the Moscow Art Theatre, founded in 1898 by Vladimir Ivanovich Nemirovich-Danchenko and Konstantin Sergeyeovich Stanislavsky, who were in revolt against the routine methods of the state theatres. In this company Stanislavsky has been the leading spirit. His stage settings have been characterized by almost photographic realism. His great achievement has been the perfect ensemble acting of his troupe, in which no one person is allowed to dominate the stage. According to his theory the actor can express only such emotions as he has actually experienced in life; perfect psychological interpretation is his ideal. To quote from Mr. Saylor: "The final achievement of the Art Theatre . . . is not mere realism, not realism alone brought to a startling mechanical perfection in its representation of life. Rather, it is a spiritualized realism, a use of the realistic form as a means and not an end, a means to the more vivid interpretation of life."* Stanislavsky's work on the stage, just as Tolstoy's in fiction, is the culmination of Russian realism. His methods were peculiarly adapted to such plays as *The Cherry Orchard* and *Down and Out*, in which there is no leading part. In the presentation of Chekhov's dramas his company has won some of its greatest successes. By the journeys of the Moscow Art Theatre in western Europe and in America, Russian acting has become famous as perhaps the best in the world.

The Cherry Orchard, as has been stated, contains, along with its pathetically realistic presentation of the declining Russian gentry, certain symbolic elements. This is a mere symptom of a change that had been coming over Russian literature in the years following 1890. Realism no longer dominated that literature as it had for the previous half century. Chekhov and Gorky carried on the traditions of Russian realism, taking their subjects from contemporary life. On the other

* *The Russian Theatre* (New York, Brentano's, 1922), p. 29.

hand, these years witnessed a notable revival of Russian poetry, and an invasion of Russian prose by a powerful strain of mysticism. It is true that the greatest of the Russian novelists had never confined themselves to the matter-of-fact reproduction of daily life. Dostoyevsky introduces into his novel *The Brothers Karamazov* a mystical digression, the prose poem of *The Grand Inquisitor*. Turgenev in his later years wrote fanciful tales like *Phantoms*, and a whole series of symbolic *Poems in Prose*. Tolstoy, straying from his true genius, wrote religious tales that in form are almost parables. Even earlier, Gogol had degenerated into a religious fanatic and had written an allegorical interpretation of his satiric comedy, *The Inspector*. But after 1890 symbolism and mysticism ceased to be subordinate in Russian literature; in the early years of the present century they became one of its main elements. Chekhov's symbolism had been a concession, whether conscious or unconscious, to the changing literary atmosphere.

In Russian poetry of this period the symbolists were the leading literary school. Their leader, Alexander Alexandrovich Blok (1880-1921), is beyond doubt the greatest of Russian poets since the death of Lermontov. The Russian symbolists professed about the same literary creed as that of their fellow craftsmen in France, but they had more pronounced philosophical interests. Disdaining mere pictures of reality, they aimed to assimilate their verse to music, suggesting ideas or emotions rather than directly stating them. Although they were predominantly lyric poets, they had considerable influence on the Russian theatre. Blok in particular wrote a number of lyric dramas, full of a haunting, mystic charm. His masterpiece, *The Rose and the Cross* (1912), is the finest poetic play in Russian. The scene is laid in thirteenth-century France; the subject is as far distant from Russian reality as any theme could well be.

Symbolist influence is seen strongly in the work of Leonid Nikolayevich Andreyev (1871-1919), the most popular author of the decade between the Revolution of 1905 and the opening of the Great War in 1914. Yet Andreyev wrote in prose, not verse, and even in prose he had no gift for genuinely poetic expression. He was a man of crude talent, without genuine culture; though he dealt continually in symbols, his work is far removed from the delicate fantasies of Blok and other members of the genuine symbolist school. His writings, which are characterized by intense gloom, reflect to a certain degree the mood of Russian society during years when reaction was triumphant in Russia, though the gloom of the writer was of earlier date than the political reaction. In his stories and novels Andreyev is most frequently a realist of a rhetorical type. In *The Red Laugh* he pictures the grim sufferings of war in a hectic style that contrasts sharply with Tolstoy's

quiet mastery in his *Sevastopol*. Elsewhere, as in *Silence*, his tone suggests that of Poe's tales of horror. The taint of exaggeration hangs over all Andreyev's work. Too often his characters seem less human beings than puppets manufactured as a means for voicing their creator's indignation at human stupidity and cruelty. In his dramas Andreyev alternates between realism and symbolism. He is realistic for instance in *The Days of Our Life*, a sordid play of student manners and morals. At other times he is wholly allegorical or symbolistic, as in *The Life of Man*, a mystery play dealing with human existence in the abstract, and informed by a harsh pessimism. Often he shows the influence of Maeterlinck, though he lacks the dignity and poise of his model. He suggests problems of conduct without offering a solution for them.

Professor Storitsyn (1912) is one of Andreyev's best plays, and it illustrates both sides of his technic. At the first glance it is a realistic tragedy based on the life of the Russian intellectual classes. Professor Storitsyn is an elderly teacher who has been an inspiration to a whole generation of young men and women. He has written treatises on literature and on æsthetics that are of real value. Yet in his personal relations he has failed utterly. His wife has deserted him for a coarse bully; his children do not respect him; he himself lacks even the stoicism to submit with dignity to the ruin about him, but pursues a futile gleam of youth and beauty. Such is the realistic side of the play. But a symbolic interpretation, whether Andreyev intended it or not, inevitably suggests itself to the reader. Storitsyn represents the bankruptcy of the intellectual and æsthetic life in a world that always has been, and will always remain, coarse and brutal. Andreyev works out his theme with less exaggeration, and with more sweetness, than in most of his plays.

Another Russian dramatist whose work is closely connected with the symbolist movement is Nikolay Nikolayevich Evreinov (born in 1879), with his doctrine of the religious potency of the theatre for spiritualizing life by lifting it above drab reality. Here he need only be mentioned, since it has been impossible to include in this volume a specimen of his work.

Opposed to the symbolists was another school of Russian poets, the futurists, led by Vladimir Vladimirovich Mayakovsky (1894-1930). While the symbolists aimed to refine still further the poetic diction of Pushkin and his successors, making it more musical, more suggestive, the futurists went to the other extreme, rejecting entirely the traditional poetic language and poetic diction, and freeing themselves from the bonds of all inherited culture. They wrote verse in the jargon of the streets, in a chaotic prosody suggestive of street oratory and adapted to declamation rather than ordinary recitation. They aimed to shock

and surprise their readers or hearers. "In the old Russia futurists were regarded simply as a comical mistake and a scandal; the fact that Mayakovsky publicly recited his poems in a woman's yellow blouse and with green pencil stripes on his face naturally contributed" * to this result. After the Revolution of 1917 Mayakovsky became a literary leader and a dramatist of real importance.

The same intellectual and æsthetic tendencies that in literature produced symbolism and futurism led to a movement away from the methods of the Moscow Art Theatre in dramatic representation. The leader of the revolt was Vsevolod Emilyevich Meyerhold, who, at first associated with the Moscow Art Theatre, left it in 1902 and began an independent career. In opposition to Stanislavsky's spiritualized realism, he represents "the theatre theatrical." Stage setting must not correspond to actual reality, but to the inward tone of the drama that is being represented. He broke down the tradition of the flat stage and introduced symbolistic, futuristic, cubist settings. Whereas Stanislavsky taught that the actors should seem unaware of the audience, Meyerhold strove for an intimate union between the stage and the auditorium. The Moscow Art Theatre, which began as a theatre of revolt, soon became regarded as the great bulwark of dramatic conservatism in Russia. Meyerhold's principles and practice, like futurism in poetry, reached their ultimate development only after the Bolshevik revolution.

The Bolshevik revolution of 1917 has as yet produced no new literary school in Russia, if one except the new proletarian poets who glorify the factory in crudely ecstatic lyrics. For example, Demyan Bedny (pseudonym for Efim Alexeyevich Pridvorov: born 1883), who is the official spokesman in verse of the Soviet Government, established a reputation before the Revolution, and made no change in his style after it. He writes in verse strongly affected by Russian folk literature, and is important for his enormous appeal to the masses of the population; his doggerel, to quote Trotsky, "if not genuine poetry, is something more." He can explain to the common folk a government policy more effectively than can any prose journalist.

On the other hand, the Revolution extinguished some "bourgeois" literary styles, and, most important, it transformed the content of the old forms by flooding them with Marxian propaganda. The new rulers of Russia brought with them new ideas of social institutions, religion, and morality, which they strove to impress upon the population by every possible means. The printing of books and magazines and the presentation of plays became essentially a state monopoly, or at least

* Alexander I. Nazarov in *The Saturday Review of Literature*, June 21, 1930.

the subject of strict state supervision; a new censorship was established far more drastic than that of the tsarist régime. Naturally, no literature opposed to Marxian doctrine was tolerated; more than that, strictly neutral literature, unconcerned with either the old order or the new, was discouraged. In Soviet Russia the Communists are the only respectable political party; in fact, all other parties are prohibited. Similarly, atheism is the only respectable creed. The Church still exists and holds services, but religious propaganda is forbidden, while anti-religious propaganda is fostered. To be in good standing with the new order, a writer must be its active proponent. Since the theatre is the form of art most accessible to the masses of a population still largely illiterate, it has become, together with the cinema and the radio, the favorite means of educating the populace to an understanding of Marxian principles. Never since the time of ancient Athens, one may say with confidence, has the theatre assumed such social importance as in Soviet Russia. Vast pageants have been organized in commemoration of the Revolution. Workmen have been encouraged to form dramatic clubs and to present plays of a revolutionary type, sometimes of their own composition. In the legitimate theatre old dramas have been adapted to communist exigencies, and new dramas, written with a direct revolutionary message, have been given a prominent place in the repertory. Even the conservative Stanislavsky, foremost representative of the great dramatic art of old Russia, has recently passed over into the Bolshevik camp and presented propaganda plays.

The view of the new Russia concerning the classic writers of times gone by is negative. Turgenev, Tolstoy, and Chekhov are names surrounded by traditional fame; their works may be read, but reading of them is not encouraged, since they are products of bourgeois society. Gorky, always a revolutionist, has become a prop of the new order. The symbolist poets, representatives of a drawing-room culture, have been cast aside with contempt, even though their leader, Alexander Blok, in his last years showed Bolshevik sympathies. The proletarian state has no use for mysticism or for purely musical, æsthetic refinements of language. With the futurists the case has been different. The futurists had made a clean sweep of the old poetic diction just as the Bolsheviks had blotted out the old political and social order; they too were revolutionists of the truest sort. Much of their work, with its capricious individualism, had been as obscure as that of the symbolists; but obscurity, aloofness from the common herd, was far from being an essential part of their literary creed. Their abrupt, declamatory, unkempt style could be made an admirable vehicle for propaganda. And their leader, Mayakovsky, had been a Bolshevik by conviction for years before the Bolshevik revolution.

So it is no wonder that Mayakovsky became for a time, next to Demyan Bedny, the chief propagandist in verse of Bolshevik principles. For example, in his most famous work, "150,000,000," written in 1919, he described the combat of Woodrow Wilson, representative of capitalism, with Ivan, the Russian workingman, concluding of course with the triumph of the latter. The poem is frank billingsgate, much malice with very little wit, but it had vast success with sympathetic readers. In the previous year he had written for the first anniversary of the Bolshevik revolution his *Mystery-Bouffe*. In a revised form (that translated in this volume) his play was again presented in 1921, on the occasion of the congress of the Communist International in Moscow. It is the outstanding achievement of the futurist drama in Russia, and at the same time a first-rate example of the Bolshevik propaganda plays.

The aim of the propaganda plays is to show the wickedness of the old government and its oppression of the proletariat, the attainment of class-consciousness by the proletariat, its struggle against its masters, and its final triumph. A propaganda play must of course have a happy ending; it habitually closes with the waving of the red flag and the singing of the *International*. Tragic emotion is excluded; the public must not be allowed to sympathize with any grandeur of soul in the representatives of the old order.

Such a formula may be developed in a variety of ways. For example, *The Days of the Turbins*, by Bulgakov, and *The Armored Train*, by Vsevolod Ivanov, presented in 1926-28 by Stanislavsky's company, are of a realistic character. But Mayakovsky adapts the formula to the requirements of an extravaganza, related to a mystery play in the same way that *opera bouffe* is related to opera. The mystery plays had shown the salvation of the world according to the Christian religion. The *Mystery-Bouffe* shows, in burlesque fashion, the salvation of the world according to communistic principles. To quote the communist critic Gorbachev, "it presents in a genially propagandistic form the fundamental truths concerning the class war, exploitation, the internationalism of the proletariat and the internationalism of the bourgeois in the struggle against revolution, concerning the part played by the intelligentsia and the clergy, concerning tsarism and the democratic republic." A deluge destroys the earth. Representatives of the Clean (bourgeois) and of the Unclean (proletarians) find a refuge at the North Pole, where they build themselves an ark in which to seek safety. After being twice duped by the Clean, the Unclean revolt and throw their opponents overboard. They then visit Hell and triumph over it, leaving it to harbor the Clean. They visit the Paradise of the Gospels and desert it contemptuously, as a hungry, joyless spot. (In his portrayal

of Hell and Paradise Mayakovsky employs the same crudely blasphemous devices that run through the propaganda of the Russian League of the Godless.) The Unclean then return to earth, repair by their own efforts the chaos prevailing after the Great War, and at last enter into the Promised Land, the Communist paradise of material plenty upon earth. Mayakovsky's humor in his mockery at monarchy, republicanism, and religion, and his serious vein in his exaltation of communistic ideals, are both of a swashbuckler sort, buffoonery—but buffoonery with a touch of genius. The style of his play, very imperfectly reproduced in the present translation, is rough and declamatory, in revolt against the delicate suggestiveness of symbolist poetry.

Since the Revolution of 1917 Meyerhold rather than Stanislavsky has been the chief figure in the world of Russian theatrical production. His rebellion against tradition and convention is in harmony with the spirit of the times. His principle that the audience should be fused with the performance is of great importance in a dramatic art that is made primarily a vehicle of propaganda. His fantastic settings can be made to express the spirit of the machine age that is the Bolshevik ideal. Appropriately enough, the *Mystery-Bouffe* was staged under his direction. His arrangement of the piece is thus described by Mr. Huntly Carter:

The objects of the production were: (1) to stage the victory of the social revolution over the world which came to an end in 1917, in the form of a heroic and satirical picture; (2) to turn the whole theatre into a stage, placing the latter as far as possible in the center of the public; and (3) to persuade the public to take part in the performance. Accordingly, Meyerhold removed all the stage accretions, leaving only the bare walls and floor. He removed the fronts of the boxes on either side of the auditorium, thus leaving two free passages running from and on a level with the stage, round the auditorium. And he further connected the stage, at the center, with the auditorium by means of a platform wide enough to take two motor side-cars abreast. In the center of the stage he placed an open structure which remained throughout, and which represented first the Ark, then Paradise. In front was a globe representing the world. In the last act he placed actors in the boxes whence the fronts had been removed. These represented different objects of production and exchange. Each "object" had to deliver a speech. Each spoke in turn to the spectators, telling them that they (the objects) no longer belonged to the rich exploiters but to the workers.*

At the close of the play the audience was naturally expected to join in the singing of the *International*.

* *The New Theatre and Cinema of Soviet Russia* (London, Chapman and Dodd, Ltd., 1924), p. 74.

Whether the Communist movement will produce authors of real genius remains to be seen; hitherto it has not done so. Nor are recent Russian innovations in theatrical technic likely to prove the harbingers of a new dramatic art. Machines on the stage do not take the place of genius in the interpretation of human life. Russia's contribution to the world's drama, as to the world's prose fiction, is the work of her great satirist Gogol, and of her great realists. *The Inspector*, *The Power of Darkness*, and *The Cherry Orchard* are the summits of Russian dramatic achievement. They are dramas that could have been produced in no country save Russia, but they are works of classic perfection, of universal significance.

THE YOUNG HOPEFUL

A Comedy in Five Acts

By DENIS IVANOVICH FONVIZIN

(1782)

*Translated by George Z. Patrick
and George Rapall Noyes*

CHARACTERS

MR. PROSTAKÓV (*Mr. Simpleton*)*
MRS. PROSTAKÓV, *his wife*
MITROFÁN, *The Young Hopeful, their son* †
YEREMÉYEVNA, *MITROFÁN'S nurse*
PRAVDÍN (*Mr. Trueman*)
STARODÚM (*Mr. Oldsense*)
SOPHIA, *his niece*
MILÓN (*Mr. Sweetheart*)
SKOTÍNIN (*Mr. Beastly*)
KUTEÝKIN (*Mr. Spree*)
CÍPHERKIN (*Mr. Cipher*)
VRÁLMAN (*Mr. Fibber*)
TRISHKA, *a tailor*
PROSTAKÓV'S SERVANT
STARODÚM'S VALET

The action takes place on the PROSTAKÓVS' estate.

NOTE.—*The Young Hopeful* was published by the author in 1783. In an edition of 1830 the text was amplified by long and tiresome tirades, taken from manuscript sources. Only a portion of this added material is retained in the present translation.

* As in the English "Comedy of Humors," the names of the characters in many cases indicate their natures.

† *Mitrofánushka* is the affectionate form of the name used by Mrs. Prostakov.

THE YOUNG HOPEFUL

ACT I

SCENE I

MRS. PROSTAKOV, MITROFAN, YEREMEYEVNA

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*examining MITROFAN's kaftan*): This kaftan is no good at all! Yeremeyevna, get that scoundrel Trishka. (*YEREMEYEVNA goes out.*) The rascal! He has made it too tight all around. Mitrofanushka, my darling; it must choke you half to death. Go, call father. (*MITROFAN goes out.*)

SCENE II

MRS. PROSTAKOV, YEREMEYEVNA, TRISHKA

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*to TRISHKA*): And you, you brute, come over here! Didn't I tell you to make the kaftan larger, you thief, you lout? In the first place, the child is still growing; and what's more, he's of a delicate enough build without being squeezed into a tight kaftan. Why don't you answer me, you blockhead? What've you got to say for yourself?

TRISHKA: Well, you know, madam, I've just taught myself to make clothes. I spoke to you about it and begged you to give it to a regular tailor.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: So you've got to be a tailor to make a decent kaftan, have you? What a stupid excuse!

TRISHKA: But a tailor has been taught how to do it, and I haven't.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Here's another one wants to argue! One tailor has learned from another, and that one from a third, and so on. But tell me, who taught the first one—answer me, you brute.

TRISHKA: I suppose the first tailor made a worse kaftan than mine.

MITROFAN (*running in*): I've called father. He says he'll be here after a while.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Go and get him, I tell you! Fetch him here whether he likes it or not!

MITROFAN: Here's father now.

SCENE III

The same and MR. PROSTAKOV

MRS. PROSTAKOV: So you've been hiding from me! Now just see for yourself, sir, what your negligence has brought me to! What do you think of our son's new suit for his uncle's betrothal? How do you like the kaftan that Trishka has made?

MR. PROSTAKOV (*stammering timidly*): Well . . . perhaps . . . a trifle baggy.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: You're baggy yourself, you wiseacre!

MR. PROSTAKOV: Why, I thought, my dear, that that was your opinion.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: And what about yourself? Where are your eyes?

MR. PROSTAKOV: When you are around, I have eyes for nothing else.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: A fine husband the Lord has blessed me with! He can't tell what's loose from what's tight!

MR. PROSTAKOV: I've always trusted to your judgment in these matters, and I still do.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: You may take my word for it, then, that I won't let the churls do as they please. Be off with you, sir, and give orders to flog—

SCENE IV

The same and SKOTININ

SKOTININ: Whom? What for? On the day of my betrothal? Please, sister, considering the joyful occasion, put off the flogging until to-morrow; and then, if you like, I'll take a hand in it myself with a will. My name ain't Taras Skotinin if I don't deal out a thrashing wherever it's due. In such matters, I always follow the same custom as you, sister. But what's got into you to make you so angry?

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Here, brother, just take a look at this yourself! Mitrofanushka, come here. Now, is this kaftan baggy?

SKOTININ: No.

MR. PROSTAKOV: I see now myself, dear, that it's too tight.

SKOTININ: I don't see that either. Why, my dear fellow, it strikes me as a first-rate kaftan.

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*to TRISHKA*): Get out, you brute! (*To YEREMEYEVNA.*) Yeremeyevna, go give the child his breakfast. I dare say the teachers'll be here soon.

YEREMEYEVNA: He's already had some, ma'am. He ate five rolls just a while ago.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: And so you begrudge him the sixth, you miserly creature! Such zeal, I declare!

YEREMEYEVNA: It's for his health's sake, ma'am. I'm looking after Mitrofan Terentyevich. He wasn't feeling well all last night.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Oh, Holy Mother! What was the matter with you, Mitrofanushka?

MITROFAN: I don't know just what, mother. I've had pains ever since supper last night.

SKOTININ: I think you had too much for supper, my boy.

MITROFAN: Why, uncle! I hardly touched anything!

SKOTININ: If I'm right, my boy, I think you did have something.

MITROFAN: Just a trifle—about three slices of corned beef and a few of those pies; I don't remember, five or maybe six.

YEREMEYEVNA: He kept asking all night long for something to drink. He emptied a whole pitcher of kvass.

MITROFAN: Even now I'm walking around half dazed. I dreamed of all sorts of silly stuff last night.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: What sort of silly stuff, Mitrofanushka?

MITROFAN: At times about you, mother; and then again, about father.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: How's that?

MITROFAN: I'd hardly shut my eyes when I saw you, mother, drubbing father.

MR. PROSTAKOV (*aside*): Ouch! Worse luck, this dream'll come true!

MITROFAN (*tenderly*): And I felt so sorry!

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*angrily*): Sorry? For whom, Mitrofanushka?

MITROFAN: For you, mother. You got so worn out thrashing dad.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Embrace me, sweetheart! Sonny is my only comfort!

SKOTININ: Well, Mitrofanushka, you're a mama's darling, that's quite plain, and not your father's son.

MR. PROSTAKOV: I love him as a father should, just the same. He's such a bright youngster—such a jolly fellow! I'm often quite beside myself with joy, and I can hardly believe that he's really my own son.

SKOTININ: But right now our jolly fellow isn't so very cheerful.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Hadn't I better send to town for the doctor?

MITROFAN: No, no, mother! I'll get well by myself. Maybe I'll just run down to the pigeon loft.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Well, perhaps God will be merciful. Go, have a good time, Mitrofanushka darling.

(MITROFAN and YEREMEYEVNA go out.)

SCENE V

MR. and MRS. PROSTAKOV, SKOTININ

SKOTININ: Why is it I don't see my bride? Where is she? To-night is the betrothal. It's high time to let her know that she's going to be married soon.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: There's no hurry, brother! If we were to break the news to her ahead of time, she might get it into her head that we were looking up to her. You know, she's only a relative of mine through my husband, and yet I love to have even strangers obey me.

MR. PROSTAKOV (*to SKOTININ*): To tell the truth, we have treated Sophia like nothing but an orphan. She was only a baby when her father died—and it's only half a year ago that her mother, a relative of mine by marriage, had a stroke—

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*pretending to cross herself*): The Lord protect us!

MR. PROSTAKOV: —which carried her off. Her uncle, Mr. Starodum, has gone to Siberia, and, since there has been no news of him for years, we regard him as dead. Seeing that she was left all alone, we brought her to our village, and we care for her property as if it were our own.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: What makes your tongue wag so much to-day, sir? My brother might get the notion that we brought her over here for our own interest.

MR. PROSTAKOV: How could he think so? We couldn't move Sophia's land up to ours.

SKOTININ: Even if her movable property has been carried away, I won't go to law for that. I'm not fond of lawsuits; I'm afraid of 'em. No matter how much my neighbors have insulted me, no matter how much damage they have done me, I have never had any litigations with them. I simply squeeze my peasants to cover the loss, and that's the end of it.

MR. PROSTAKOV: That's true, brother. The whole district says that you're a great hand at getting work out of your peasants.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: I wish you'd teach us, dear brother, for we don't know how it's done. Since we've taken away everything the peasants have, we can't possibly squeeze another thing out of them. It's a real misfortune!

SKOTININ: I won't mind giving you a lesson, sister, if you'll only marry me to Sophia.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Have you really taken such a fancy to this creature?

SKOTININ: Well, it's not so much the wench herself.

MR. PROSTAKOV: Then it's her adjoining villages?

SKOTININ: Not ever her villages, but what they raise in her villages, for which I have a great passion.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: What's that, brother?

SKOTININ: I'm fond of hogs, sister. Why, down our way, there are such thumping big pigs that every single one of them, if it stood up on its hind legs, would be a head taller than any of us.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Isn't that queer, this family likeness! Our Mitrofan is just like his uncle—he's had the same passion for hogs ever since his babyhood. When he was only three years old he would tremble for joy every time he laid eyes on a pig.

SKOTININ: How truly remarkable! Very well then, Mitrofan loves pigs because he is my nephew—there is a certain family trait there. But now, tell me, how does it happen that *I* have such a passion for pigs?

MR. PROSTAKOV: There must be some family trait there too, that's what I think.

SCENE VI

SOPHIA enters holding a letter in her hand and looking cheerful.

MRS. PROSTAKOV (to SOPHIA): Why so merry, dear? What has made you so happy?

SOPHIA: I've just received some very good news. My uncle, of whom we have not heard for such a long time—and whom I love and respect as my own father—arrived in Moscow a few days ago. Here's the letter I've just received from him.

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*frightened, angrily*): What? Starodum, your uncle, is alive! And do you really mean to say he's been resurrected? A likely story, indeed!

SOPHIA: Why, he never was dead!

MRS. PROSTAKOV: He didn't die? Why couldn't he have died? No, my fine young lady, that's all your own story. You're using your uncle to scare us into giving you your liberty. Here's what you think: "My uncle is a clever man. Seeing me in other people's hands he'll find a way of setting me free." That's what makes you so happy now, my dear—but just don't you be too merry. Your uncle, of course, has never thought of rising from the dead.

SKOTININ: But, sister, what if he never did die?

MR. PROSTAKOV: May the Lord help us if he didn't!

MRS. PROSTAKOV (to her husband): Didn't die? What're you talking about? Why, it's sheer nonsense! Don't you know that for several years I've had the priests remember him in their prayers for the repose of his soul? Is it possible my humble prayers have never reached heaven? (To SOPHIA.) Here, give me that letter, you! (*Almost*

tearing the letter from her hand.) I'll wager whatever you like that it's some love letter—easy to tell from whom! It's from that officer who wanted to marry you—not that you weren't setting your cap for him yourself. Show me the rascal that dares hand you letters without telling me about them first! I'll attend to the likes of *him*! So that's what we've come to, eh? They scribble their notes to girls, and the minxes know well enough how to read!

SOPHIA: Read it yourself, madam. You will see that nothing could be more innocent than this letter.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Read it yourself, indeed! No, young lady, thank the Lord, *I* was not brought up to such tricks. I may receive letters, but I always have them read to me. (*To her husband.*) Read it!

MR. PROSTAKOV (*looking at it for some time*): It's more than I can read.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: And you too, sir, seem to have been educated like a fair maiden. Brother, will you please read it?

SKOTININ: I? I haven't read a line since I was born! God has spared me such a nuisance!

SOPHIA: Let me read it to you.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Aha, not much, my dear! I know how clever you are at it! But I'll not trust you so far. There, Mitrofan's teacher will soon be here, so I'll just ask *him*!

SKOTININ: So you've already begun to teach your youngster?

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Oh, my dear brother! Why, he's been studying these four years. Needless to say, we are quite above reproach in this respect. We don't stint ourselves on Mitrofanushka's education. We hire three teachers for him. Kuteykin, the deacon from Pokrov, teaches him grammar. Arikmethick he studies with CIPHERKIN, a retired sergeant. They both come from town, which is two miles away. French and all the sciences, he takes with Adam Adamych Vralman, a German. That fellow gets three hundred rubles a year. We allow him to eat at the same table with us, and the peasant women wash his linen. If he has to travel anywhere, he gets our horses; at table he always has a glass of wine, and at night a tallow candle, and, besides that, Fomka ties his wig for nothing. To tell the truth, we are satisfied with him, brother, for he doesn't drive our child. I can't see, anyway, why we shouldn't be indulgent to Mitrofan as long as he is a minor. He'll have enough to suffer ten years or so from now, in case, the Lord forbid, he should have to enter the service. You know, brother, some people have all the luck with them from birth. Now you take our family of Prostakovs, they get all kinds of promotions while lying softly on their sides. And is Mitrofanushka any worse than they? Ah, here comes our dear guest!

SCENE VII

The same and PRAVDIN

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Brother dear, let me introduce our dear guest to you—Mr. Pravdin. And to you, sir, allow me to present my brother.

PRAVDIN: I am pleased to meet you.

SKOTININ: The pleasure is mine, sir. What's your name? I didn't quite catch it.

PRAVDIN: My name is Pravdin—if you wish to hear it.

SKOTININ: Where born, sir? Your villages, where are they?

PRAVDIN: I was born in Moscow, if you must know, and my villages are in this province.

SKOTININ: And may I ask you—I don't know your first name and patronymic—are there any hogs in your villages?

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Now brother, just stop your chattering about those pigs of yours. Let's rather speak of our troubles. (*To PRAVDIN.*) Listen to me, sir. The Lord has willed that we take this maiden under our care—and she thinks it quite proper to receive letters from her uncles. Her uncles, mind you, write to her from heaven. Please do us a favor, sir, and read this letter aloud.

PRAVDIN: I am sorry, madam, I never read letters without the permission of those to whom they have been addressed.

SOPHIA: Please do. I shall be much obliged to you.

PRAVDIN: Since it is your wish. (*Reads.*) "Darling Niece: For some years now, my business affairs have made it necessary for me to live away from my relatives, and the great distance has deprived me of the pleasure of receiving any news from you. Just now I am staying in Moscow, after having been for some years in Siberia. I am a living example of the fact that by work and honesty it is possible to make one's fortune. By these means, and by not a little good luck, I have put by enough to have a yearly income of ten thousand rubles—"

SKOTININ and the PROSTAKOVs: Ten thousand!

PRAVDIN (*reads*): "—of which I make you, my dear niece, the sole heiress!"

MRS. PROSTAKOV: You an heiress!

MR. PROSTAKOV: Sophia an heiress! { *Together.*

SKOTININ: Her? An heiress!

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*hastening to embrace SOPHIA*): Congratulations, Sophia! Congratulations, my darling! I am quite beside myself with joy! Now you do need a husband! For my part, I could not wish a better bride for my Mitrofan. That's a fine uncle! A real father

indeed! I always did think that God was taking care of him!—that he was still in the land of the living!

SKOTININ (*stretching out his hand*): Well, sister, let us settle the business right away.

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*whispering to SKOTININ*): Wait, brother! We'll have to ask her first whether she'll have you.

SKOTININ: What a question! Why do you propose to look up to *her* now?

PRAVDIN: Do you want me to finish the letter?

SKOTININ: What for? Even if you were to keep on reading for five solid years you'd never get to anything better than "Ten thousand!"

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*to SOPHIA*): Sophia, my darling! Come with me to my bedroom. There's something I'd like to tell you. (*Leads SOPHIA out.*)

SKOTININ: Pshaw! I see there's not much chance for a betrothal to-day!

SCENE VIII

PROSTAKOV, PRAVDIN, SKOTININ *and a SERVANT*

SERVANT (*out of breath, to PROSTAKOV*): Sir! Sir! Some soldiers have come! They've stopped in our village!

MR. PROSTAKOV: What a misfortune! They'll ruin us completely!

PRAVDIN: Why are you so frightened?

MR. PROSTAKOV: Oh, my dear sir! I've seen things before. I'm afraid to go and face them.

PRAVDIN: You needn't be afraid. Of course, an officer is leading them, and he will not permit any disorder. Come, let us go to him. I am sure you are frightened for nothing.

(PROSTAKOV, PRAVDIN, *and the SERVANT go out.*)

SKOTININ: They have left me all alone. I believe I'll just stroll down to the pigpen.

ACT II

SCENE I

PRAVDIN *and MILON*

MILON: I am very glad, my dear friend, that I have run across you so unexpectedly. Tell me by what chance—

PRAVDIN: As your friend, I will tell you the reason for my being here. I am appointed a member of the local government. I have an

order to investigate this district; and, moreover, the promptings of my own conscience will not permit me to overlook those malicious, ignorant persons who so abominably misuse the absolute power they wield over their people. You are acquainted with our governor's attitude in such matters. With what enthusiasm he works for the cause of suffering humanity! With what zeal he is thus carrying out the humane policies of the higher authorities! In our own county, we ourselves have seen that the welfare of the people is safe and secure whenever they are under the charge of a governor such as is described in the Imperial Ordinances. I have been here for three days, and I have come upon a landowner, an unspeakable fool, and his wife, a spiteful fury, whose infernal temper makes their entire household unhappy. But why so thoughtful, my friend? Tell me, are you planning to stay here long?

MILON: No, I am leaving in a few hours.

PRAVDIN: Why so soon? Take a rest for a while.

MILON: I cannot. I have orders to take my soldiers away immediately; and, besides, I am burning with impatience to reach Moscow.

PRAVDIN: What's the reason?

MILON: My dear friend, I will confess to you the secret of my heart. I am in love, and I am fortunate enough to have my love returned. It's over half a year, now, that I have been away from the girl who is more precious to me than anything in the world, and, what is worse, I have not heard from her all this time. Thinking her silence might be due to indifference, I was often tormented to desperation; but suddenly, I received a message which overwhelmed me. They wrote to me that after her mother's death some distant relatives took her away to their estate. I do not know who they are or where she is. Perhaps she is even now in the hands of some covetous people who are taking advantage of the fact that she is an orphan and are abusing her. The very thought of this makes me almost beside myself.

PRAVDIN: I can see just such abuse in this house; I flatter myself, however, that I can soon put an end to the stupidity of the husband and the cruelty of his wife. I have already informed our chief about all this, and I have no doubt that measures will be taken to bring these people to reason.

MILON: You are lucky, my friend, that you are in a position to lighten the burden of the unfortunate. I am at a loss what to do in my own unhappy case.

PRAVDIN: May I ask her name?

MILON (*in rapture*): Ah! There she is herself!

SCENE II

The same and SOPHIA

SOPHIA: Milon! Whom do I see? Is it really you?

PRAVDIN: What good fortune!

MILON: This is the one who possesses my heart. Sophia! Darling! Tell me what chance has brought you here?

SOPHIA: I have suffered so much since the day of our parting! My unscrupulous relatives—

PRAVDIN: My friend! Don't ask her about things that grieve her. You will hear from me what ill treatment . . .

MILON: What evil people!

SOPHIA: To-day, however, our mistress has changed her attitude toward me. Having heard that my uncle has made me his heiress, all of a sudden, from being rude and abusive, she has become kind-hearted to the point of servility, and, from all her hints, I gather that she plans to make me the fiancée of her son.

MILON (*vexed*): And didn't you show her at once your utter contempt?

SOPHIA: No. . . .

MILON: And didn't you tell her that you have promised, that you are attached to some one, that . . .

SOPHIA: No. . . .

MILON: Ah! Now I see my own ruin. My rival is happy. I do not deny all his merits. He *may* be clever, educated, lovable—but I refuse to think that his love for you can be compared with mine, that . . .

SOPHIA (*smiling*): Oh, Lord! Had you ever seen him, your jealousy would have driven you to despair.

MILON (*indignantly*): I can well imagine all his merits.

SOPHIA: You can't imagine even a single one of them. Though he is only sixteen, he has already reached the highest peak of his accomplishments—and he will go no farther.

PRAVDIN: But, my dear lady, why won't he go any farther? He is already finishing the Prayer Book, and then—well, then, we may suppose, they will give him the Psalter to study.

MILON: What! Is that what my rival is like? Ah! Sophia, dear! Why torment me even with a joke? You know how easy it is to upset a passionate man with even the slightest suspicion. Do tell me: what did you answer his mother?

(SKOTININ, *lost in thought, walks in unnoticed.*)

SOPHIA: I told her that my fate depended upon my uncle's wishes;

that in his letter, which Mr. Skotinin would not let you read to the end, he promised to come here.

MILON: Skotinin!

SKOTININ: Yes, sir!

SCENE III

The same and SKOTININ

PRAVDIN: And so you have sneaked in, Mr. Skotinin? I did not expect this from you.

SKOTININ: I just happened to be passing by. I heard somebody call me, and then I answered. Such is my habit: if anybody calls "Skotinin!" I always say, "Here I am, sir!" Why, my dear fellows, this is truly so! I myself have served in the Guards—and retired as a corporal. At roll call, when they used to shout "Taras Skotinin!" then I always answered at the top of my voice, "Here, sir!"

PRAVDIN: We have not called you now, and you may go wherever it was you were headed for.

SKOTININ: I wasn't going anywhere in particular. I was just strolling along and thinking. It's a habit I have. Once I get something into my head, no one can drive it out with a hammer. That's the way it is with me, do you hear? Whatever gets into my head—there it settles down. My thoughts are continually on it, always the same thing: I dream in my dreams about the very same thing, just as if it were real; and when I am awake, I see it as if it were a dream.

PRAVDIN: What is it that you are so much interested in now?

SKOTININ: You yourself are a clever man. What do you think of this: My sister brought me over here to get married, and now she herself is trying to get out of it. "Brother," she says, "you don't need a wife; what you need is a good pig!" "No, sister!" says I, "I want to breed my own sucklings. You can't lead me around by the nose!"

PRAVDIN: It seems to me, too, Mr. Skotinin, that your sister intends to have a wedding—but not yours.

SKOTININ: Well, what of it? I won't stand in another man's way. Let every one marry his own bride. I won't meddle with anybody else's woman, and the other fellow must keep his hands off mine. (To SOPHIA.) Have no fear, my sweet, nobody will take you away from me!

SOPHIA: What is this? This is something new to me!

MILON (*exclaims*): What insolence!

SKOTININ (*to SOPHIA*): What are you afraid of?

PRAVDIN (*to MILON*): How can you get angry at Skotinin?

SOPHIA (*to SKOTININ*): Is it possible that I am fated to be your wife?

MILON: I can hardly control myself!

SKOTININ: Well, my sweet, one cannot escape one's fate! It's a sin for you to complain about your lot. With me, you'll live in clover. Ten thousand as your income! What a fortune! What a stroke of luck I've had! In all my life I've never seen anything like it. With this money I'll buy up all the pigs in the world; then, just listen to me, I'll do such things that everybody will trumpet: "In this county here only the pigs live like swells."

PRAVDIN: If only animals can be happy with you, then your wife won't fare well with you and with them.

SKOTININ: She won't fare well? Nonsense! Have I only a few rooms? I'll let her have, all to herself, the corner room with the big stove. My dear fellow, if I can now afford a separate sty for every piggy, I won't have much difficulty finding a room for my wife.

MILON: What a brutal comparison!

PRAVDIN (to SKOTININ): This will never come true, Mr. Skotinin! I see that your sister is playing with you like a ball.

SKOTININ: Like a ball? Lord have mercy! I'll throw her off so far that nobody in the whole village will find her in weeks!

PRAVDIN: I'm quite certain that she intends to marry Sophia to her son.

SKOTININ (*angrily*): What! A nephew competing with his uncle? Well, just let me catch him! I'll knock the stuffing out of him, devil take him! May I be the son of a pig if I don't make either a husband for Sophia or a cripple of Mitrofan!

SCENE IV

The same, YEREMEYEVNA and MITROFAN

YEREMEYEVNA: Won't you study just a little? Do, please!

MITROFAN: One more word out of you, you old hag! I'll fix you! I'll tell mother, and you'll get just such a thrashing as you got yesterday!

SKOTININ: Come over here, my boy.

YEREMEYEVNA: Won't you please go to your uncle?

MITROFAN: How d'ye do, uncle! What're you bristling up for?

SKOTININ: Mitrofan! Look at me—straight!

YEREMEYEVNA: Look at him, little master.

MITROFAN (to YEREMEYEVNA): But why? Uncle's nothing new to me. What's there to see in him?

SKOTININ: Once more. Look straight at me.

YEREMEYEVNA: Don't provoke your uncle. See, little master, how he pops his eyes out? Well, and you, too, open your eyes wide.

(SKOTININ and MITROFAN stare at each other with their eyes wide open.)

MILON: What an imposing interview.

PRAVDIN: I wonder how all this will end.

SKOTININ: Mitrofan! Your life hangs by a hair! Tell me the whole truth. If I had not been afraid of committing a mortal sin, I should have grabbed you by the legs, without saying a word, and knocked you against the corner post. But I do not want to imperil my soul without finding the guilty one.

YEREMEYEVNA (*trembling*): Ah, he will kill him! Where shall I go? Oh! Poor me!

MITROFAN: Why, uncle! Are you crazy? I don't know why you are so mad at me.

SKOTININ: Now look here, my boy, and don't contradict me, or I'll give you such a thumping as will knock the wind out of you; and you won't even lift a hand to protect yourself. And then it's my sin and I am guilty before God and the tsar. Look here now, don't you accuse yourself either, or you will suffer unjust punishment!

YEREMEYEVNA: God forbid injustice!

SKOTININ: Do you want to marry?

MITROFAN (*tenderly*): Yes, dear uncle, I've had such a desire for quite a while.

SKOTININ (*attacking MITROFAN*): Oh! You cursed pig!

PRAVDIN (*halting SKOTININ*): Mr. Skotinin! Don't be too hasty with your fists!

MITROFAN: Nurse! Save me!

YEREMEYEVNA (*shielding MITROFAN; she is furious and shakes her fists*): I'll die on the spot before I'll give up my child! Come on, mister! Just you try! I'll scratch your eyes out!

SKOTININ (*trembles and moves away threateningly*): Just you wait! I'll catch you yet!

YEREMEYEVNA: My own claws are sharp, too!

MITROFAN (*to SKOTININ*): The devil take you, uncle! You'd better get out!

SCENE V

The same and Mr. and Mrs. PROSTAKOV

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*to her husband, as they enter*): There is nothing to exaggerate here. All your life, sir, you have done nothing but gape and flap your ears.

MR. PROSTAKOV: But he himself and Mr. Pravdin—they both vanished out of my sight all of a sudden. Why am I to blame?

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*to MILON*): Ah! My dear Mr. Officer! I have been looking for you throughout the entire village. I have almost driven my husband to death searching for you. We want to express our humble gratitude to you, my dear sir, for your kind-hearted soldiers.

MILON: What for, madam?

MRS. PROSTAKOV: What for, my dear sir? Your soldiers are so kind. Up to now they haven't touched the least thing. Don't be vexed, sir, that this blockhead of mine has missed you. Never, for the life of him, can he treat anybody decently. It's his nature, my dear sir! He was born that way—such a lazybones!

MILON: I am not vexed in the least, madam.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: He gets queer from time to time, my dear sir; then he is struck dumb, as we say. Sometimes he stands for hours at a stretch as if rooted to the spot, and gapes. What haven't I done to him! What hasn't he suffered from me! Nothing will bring him to reason. And then again, when he gets over one of those fits, he talks such rubbish, my dear sir, that I pray God to send him another fit.

PRAVDIN: But then, at least, you can't complain, madam, that he has a bad temper. He is docile—

MRS. PROSTAKOV: As a calf, my dear sir; that is why everybody is so spoiled in this house. He hasn't sense enough to know that there must be strict order in the house so that the guilty will have their due punishment. I manage everything all by myself, dear sir; I shout from morning till night. Between swearing and flogging I have no rest at all; and that's how I manage to keep the house together, my dear sir.

PRAVDIN (*aside*): It will be managed differently soon.

MITROFAN: And to-day my mother spent the entire morning with the serfs.

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*to SOPHIA*): I've straightened out the rooms for your uncle. I am dying to see that worthy old gentleman. I have heard so much of him. Even his enemies can say only that he is a little bit too glum. But he is so clever, so clever, they say, and when he once loves anybody he loves sincerely.

PRAVDIN: And whoever he does not love is sure to be a bad man. (*To SOPHIA.*) I've had the honor of knowing your uncle. And from all I've heard about him I can tell you that deep in my soul I feel a sincere respect for him. What some call gruffness—moroseness—is only a result of his straightforwardness. Never in his life did his tongue say "yes" when his soul meant "no."

SOPHIA: That's why he had to work so hard to get his fortune.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: It's through the Lord's mercy for us that he succeeded. I do not want anything so much as his fatherly kindness for our Mitrofanushka. Sophie, my darling, wouldn't you like to have a look at your uncle's rooms? (SOPHIA goes out. To MR. PROSTAKOV.) You're gaping again, my dear sir. Now, sir, do escort her. You still have your legs.

MR. PROSTAKOV (going out): I still have them, but they are mighty shaky.

MRS. PROSTAKOV (to her guests): My only care, my only joy, is Mitrofanushka. My life is on the decline. I am trying to make a man of him.

(KUTEYKIN, with a Prayer Book, and CIPHERKIN, with a slate and slate pencil, appear at the door. Both ask YEREMEYEVNA by signs whether they may enter. She beckons to them, but MITROFAN shakes his head.)

MRS. PROSTAKOV (without seeing them, continues): Perhaps, if it is the Lord's will, he is destined to be fortunate.

PRAVDIN: Turn around, madam. Look what's going on behind you.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Ah, these, my dear sir, are Mitrofanushka's teachers—Sidorych Kuteykin . . .

YEREMEYEVNA: And Pafnutyich * Cipherkin.

MITROFAN (aside): The devil take them, and Yeremeyevna too!

KUTEYKIN: Peace be with you for many a year, ye masters of the house, with your offspring and domestics!

CIPHERKIN: We wish long life to your Honor! A hundred years—and then twenty! And fifteen more! Innumerable years!

MILON: Why, this one is our fellow soldier! Where did you come from, my dear fellow?

CIPHERKIN: Used to serve in the garrison, your Honor! And now I am retired.

MILON: How do you earn your living?

CIPHERKIN: Oh, just anyhow, your Honor. I understand a bit of arithmetic, and so in town I get my living in the municipal office doing accounting for the people. The Lord did not reveal learning to every one. Those who can't do it themselves hire me either to check up or to balance the bills. That's how I earn my living. I don't like to live in idleness. In my spare time I teach children. And here—this is the third year I have been struggling with his Honor's boy, doing fractions, but somehow we haven't done so well. But then it's true that one man differs from another.

* The use of the patronymics here, without the first names, implies contemptuous condescension.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: What? What's that, Pafnutyich? What lies are you telling? I didn't get it.

CIPHERKIN: So it is, then. I have been telling his Honor that whereas it will sometimes take ten years to drive something into a blockhead, somebody else catches it on the fly.

PRAVDIN (to KUTEYKIN): And you, Mr. Kuteykin, are you a scholar?

KUTEYKIN: Yes, a scholar, your Honor! I used to be a student in the seminary of the local diocese. I went as far as rhetoric, but the Lord willed that I should turn back. I sent a petition to the Consistory in which I wrote: "Such and such a student of the seminary, of a priestly family, hath become afraid of the abyss of wisdom, and requesteth his dismissal." This was followed by a gracious resolution, with the notation, "Such and such a student is to be released from school attendance, for it is written: 'Cast not your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet.'"

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Where is our Adam Adamych?

YEREMEYEVNA: I was going to his room, but scarcely escaped alive. There is such a thick cloud of smoke, dear mistress! The scoundrel almost choked me to death with his tobacco! Such a sinner!

KUTEYKIN: Nonsense, Yeremeyevna. There is no sin in smoking tobacco.

PRAVDIN (*aside*): Kuteykin, too, is showing off.

KUTEYKIN: Many holy books permit it. In the Psalter it is printed: "And herb for the service of man."

PRAVDIN: And where else?

KUTEYKIN: And in the other Psalter the same thing is printed. Our father, the priest, has a tiny book of about one-eighth of an inch—and in that one it's the same thing.

PRAVDIN (to MRS. PROSTAKOV): I don't want to disturb your son's studies; please excuse me.

MILON: Neither do I, madam.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: But where are you going, gentlemen?

PRAVDIN: I will take him to my room. We are friends and we have not seen each other for a long time. We have a lot to talk over.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: What about dinner? Where would you like to have it, in your room or with us? We have only our own family at table, and Sophie.

MILON: With you, with you, madam.

PRAVDIN: We shall share the honor.

SCENE VI

MRS. PROSTAKOV, YEREMEYEVNA, MITROFAN, KUTEYKIN, and
CIPHERKIN

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Well, then, read the review lesson in grammar, Mitrofanushka.

MITROFAN: Yes, the review lesson. You needn't expect me to do it.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Live and learn, my darling. Such is life.

MITROFAN: What if it isn't so at all? How can one study here? You should have brought more uncles here.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: What? What is it?

MITROFAN: Yes, I may get thrashed by my uncle most any time. And between his fists and the Prayer Book—! No, thank you! Better make an end of it all! . . .

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*frightened*): What! What are you going to do? Come to yourself, my darling!

MITROFAN: But the river here is close by. I'll dive in, and then I'm lost forever!

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*beside herself*): You are killing me! You are killing me! The Lord help you!

YEREMEYEVNA: It's his uncle who has frightened him. He almost pulled his hair out, and it was for no reason at all.

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*angrily*): Well?

YEREMEYEVNA: He pestered him: "Do you want to marry?"

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Well?

YEREMEYEVNA: Naturally, the child did not deny it. "Yes, uncle," says he, "for quite a while I have wanted to." And, dear mistress, he went crazy! He rushed . . .

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*trembling*): And you . . . you rascally wretch! You were dumbfounded. You did not clutch my brother's mug, you did not slit his dirty snout to his ears!

YEREMEYEVNA: I started, but then—oh, I made a move, but . . .

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Yes, but! But, of course this is not your child, you rascally woman! Much it would be to you if the child were beaten to death! . . .

YEREMEYEVNA: Oh! Lord save me! Have mercy! If your brother hadn't got out of my reach at that very instant I would have fought him, no matter at what price, before our Lord! (*Pointing to her nails.*) These would have become dull. I wouldn't have spared my tusks either!

MRS. PROSTAKOV: You're all zealous in words, you scoundrels, but not in deeds!

YEREMEYEVNA (*weeping*): Am I not zealous, dear mistress? How can I work more for you? I do not know—I would be glad . . . not only to give my life . . . and even this is not enough!

KUTEYKIN: And do you wish us to go?

CIPHERKIN: Where shall we march, your Honor? } *Together.*

MRS. PROSTAKOV: And you, an old witch, and bawling! Go, give them some food, and after dinner come back at once! (*To MITROFAN.*) And you come with me, Mitrofanushka, I won't let you out of my sight. I'll tell you something very nice and your life will be sweet again. You won't study all your life, my darling! not all your life! You already know so much that, with God's help, you will know how to raise your children. (*To YEREMEYEVNA.*) I shall settle with my brother, but not in your way. Let all good people see what it is to be just a nurse and what it is to be a real mother. (*Goes out with MITROFAN.*)

KUTEYKIN: Your life, Yeremeyevna, is as outer darkness. Let us go to the board, and, first of all, a glass to drown our griefs.

CIPHERKIN: And then another, and there you have your multiplication for you!

YEREMEYEVNA (*in tears*): The devil himself won't have me! Forty years in their service, and their gratitude is the same as ever!

KUTEYKIN: And are your wages good?

YEREMEYEVNA: Five rubles a year, and five slaps in the face a day. (*KUTEYKIN and CIPHERKIN take her by the arms and lead her away.*)

CIPHERKIN: At the table we'll reckon what your income will be for the whole year.

ACT III

SCENE I

STARODUM and PRAVDIN

PRAVDIN: We had just left the table, when, standing by the window, I noticed your carriage, and, without speaking to anybody, I ran out to meet you, to embrace you with all my heart. My sincerest respects to you.

STARODUM: I appreciate your thoughtfulness, I assure you.

PRAVDIN: Your friendship is very flattering because you cherish it for no people, except such as—

STARODUM: As yourself. I talk without any ceremony. Where ceremony starts, sincerity ends.

PRAVDIN: Your ways—

STARODUM: Many ridicule them. I know it. So be it. My father brought me up according to the manners of his time, and I have not thought it necessary to train myself anew. He served under Peter the Great. Then a man was addressed as "thou" and not as "you." The contagion was unknown then by which an individual thinks of himself in the plural number. And yet, nowadays, several men are often not worth even one. My father, at the court of Peter the Great—

PRAVDIN: I heard he was in the military service. . . .

STARODUM: In those days the courtiers were soldiers, but the soldiers were not courtiers. My father gave me the best education of his time. In those times there were few means of education, and then again, people had not learned how to stuff an empty head with somebody else's wit.

PRAVDIN: The education of that period consisted indeed of just a few rules. . . .

STARODUM: Just one rule. My father told me again and again: "Have a heart, have a soul, and you will be a human being always." As to the rest—it's only a fashion. There is a fashion for wits, a fashion for learning, just as there's a fashion for buckles or buttons.

PRAVDIN: What you say is quite true. A man's only merit is the possession of a soul.

STARODUM: Without it the most educated man is a pitiful creature. (*With feeling.*) An ignoramus without a soul is a brute. The least action leads him into a crime. It makes no difference to him why he acts so, or to what purpose he does it. I have come here to rescue from brutes like this—

PRAVDIN: Your niece, I know that. She is here. Let's go. . . .

STARODUM: Wait. My blood is still boiling with rage at the contemptible conduct of the masters of this house. Let's wait here a few minutes. I make it a rule, never to begin anything without thinking it over.

PRAVDIN: There are few who could abide by your rule.

STARODUM: Life with its experience has taught it to me. Oh, if I had known how to control myself earlier in life, I should have had the pleasure of serving my fatherland longer.

PRAVDIN: In what way? Nobody can be indifferent to the experiences of a man of your character. You will much oblige me, if you will relate—

STARODUM: I don't make a secret of them, for I feel that other men, in similar circumstances, may benefit by them. When I entered the service, I became acquainted with a young count, whose name I refuse even to mention. He was the son of a father who had been

lucky enough to win distinction, and he entered the service later than I. Having been brought up in high society, he had had an opportunity to learn much that had not yet come within the limits of an ordinary education. I used all my efforts to gain his friendship, so that in daily contact with him I might overcome the shortcomings of my own training. At the very time when our mutual friendship was becoming intimate, we suddenly heard that war had been declared. I rushed to him and embraced him with joy: "My dear count! Here is a chance for us to distinguish ourselves. Let us enlist right away, and make ourselves worthy of the name of noblemen which belongs to us by birth." Immediately my count made a wry face and, embracing me, said coldly: "*Bon voyage*, my friend, but I certainly hope that my father won't care to part with me." You cannot imagine the scorn which I felt for him at that moment. I saw then and there that between lucky men and men of worth there is sometimes an immense difference, that in high society there are most petty souls, and that even with a fine education one may still be a great poltroon.

PRAVDIN: That is quite true.

STARODUM: Bidding him farewell, I immediately went where my duty called me. I had many chances to distinguish myself. My wounds prove that I did not neglect such opportunities. The good opinion of my superiors and of the soldiers about me was a flattering reward of my service. Then I had a surprise. I was informed that the count, my former acquaintance, of whom I loathed to think, had been promoted ahead of me, and that I myself had been overlooked—I, who was then confined to my bed by a serious illness resulting from my wounds. Heartbroken at such injustice, I retired at once.

PRAVDIN: What else could you have done?

STARODUM: I should have reasoned it out. I did not know how to control the first impulse of my wounded ambition. At that time my hot temper would not let me reason that a truly ambitious man is anxious about his work and not about his rank; that promotions are not infrequently obtained through influence, but that real dignity is necessarily attained through service; that it is far more honest to have been unjustly overlooked than to have been promoted without having done anything of merit.

PRAVDIN: But is it not impossible for a nobleman to retire under any circumstances whatever?

STARODUM: He may do so only in one case: when it is his innermost conviction that his service is of no direct value to his fatherland. Ah, then you may go.

PRAVDIN: You make me feel what is the true nature of a nobleman's duty.

STARODUM: Having retired, I came to St. Petersburg. There a mere chance brought me into a sphere of life of which I had never thought before.

PRAVDIN: What was it?

STARODUM: The court. I was admitted to the court. Eh? What do you think?

PRAVDIN: Well, how did that sphere of life appear to you?

STARODUM: It's very curious. At first it seemed queer to me that in that sphere no one keeps to the direct road; almost everybody takes some roundabout path, in the hope of arriving the sooner.

PRAVDIN: Even though a roundabout road, is it wide enough?

STARODUM: Yes, it's so very wide that when two men meet they have no room to pass! The first one knocks the other one down, and the man who is on his feet will never raise the man who is lying on the ground.

PRAVDIN: Well, then, that's what you call ambition.

STARODUM: It's not ambition, but—what shall I say?—rather egotism. In that world, they love themselves inordinately, and care about nothing else; their only concern is for the present moment. Would you believe that I saw there a multitude of people who, throughout the course of their lives, had never given a thought to their ancestors or to their posterity?

PRAVDIN: But those worthy men who, by their presence at court, are serving the state—

STARODUM: Oh! They do not attend the court because they are of use to the court; and as to the rest, they come because the court is useful to them. I was not among the former group, and I refused to be among the latter.

PRAVDIN: Of course, you were not noticed there?

STARODUM: So much the better for me. I succeeded in getting out of it without much ado; otherwise they would have gotten rid of me by one of two means.

PRAVDIN: What are those?

STARODUM: At the court, my friend, one is gotten rid of by two methods: either somebody gets angry at you, or they make you angry yourself. I did not wait for either the one or the other. I reckoned that it was better to live in my own home than in somebody else's hall.

PRAVDIN: And so you left the court empty-handed. (*Opens his snuffbox.*)

STARODUM (*taking tobacco from PRAVDIN*): Why empty-handed? Suppose now a snuffbox costs five hundred rubles. Two men come to the merchant. One, having paid the money, takes the snuffbox home. The other goes home without the snuffbox. And so you think that

the other man comes home empty-handed? You are mistaken. He brings back his five hundred rubles intact. I left the court without villages, without decorations, without promotions, but I brought safely home my own soul, my honor and my code of conduct.

PRAVDIN: Men with a moral code like yours should not be dismissed from the court, rather should they be asked to enter that career.

STARODUM: To enter it? And what for?

PRAVDIN: What for? Why is a physician necessary for a sick man?

STARODUM: My friend, you are mistaken! It is no use to call in a doctor to an incurable patient. In this case a physician can do no good—he may even contract the disease himself.

SCENE II

The same and SOPHIA

SOPHIA (*to PRAVDIN*): All this noise has fairly exhausted me.

STARODUM (*aside*): There! Her mother's features! It is my Sophia!

SOPHIA (*looking at STARODUM*): Gracious Heavens! He called me by name. My heart does not deceive me. . . .

STARODUM (*embracing her*): No! You are my sister's child; you are the child of my heart!

SOPHIA (*throwing herself into his arms*): Uncle, dear! I am beside myself with joy.

STARODUM: Dear Sophia! I found out, while in Moscow, that you were living here against your own wishes. I am sixty years old. Often have I been irritated, at times I have been content with myself. Nothing has ever tormented my heart so much as when I have seen innocence ensnared by cupidity. Never have I been so content with myself as when I have succeeded in snatching the prey from wickedness.

PRAVDIN: It is such a pleasure to witness it!

SOPHIA: Uncle, dear! Your kindness to me—

STARODUM: You don't understand that you are the one thing that attaches me to life. It is you who must be the comfort of my old age, and my concern for you must bring you happiness. When I retired, I made a provision for your education, but I could not provide you with a fortune except by leaving you and your mother.

SOPHIA: Your absence was unspeakably hard for us.

STARODUM (*to PRAVDIN*): In order to protect her from want, I decided to go for a few years to that country where one makes money without bartering away one's conscience, without vile servility, without robbing the state; where one demands riches from the earth itself,

which is more just than men, which is no respecter of persons, and which lavishly and unfailingly rewards one's labor.

PRAVDIN: As I have heard, you could have gained even greater wealth.

STARODUM: And what for?

PRAVDIN: In order to be as rich as others.

STARODUM: Rich? And who is rich? Do you not yet know that the whole of Siberia would not suffice for the satisfaction of one single man's whim? My friend, everything depends on imagination! Follow nature, and you will never be poor. Follow public opinion, and you will never be rich.

SOPHIA: Oh, uncle! How true that is!

STARODUM: I have made enough so that when you marry, the poverty of a worthy man will not be an obstacle.

SOPHIA: Your will shall be my law all my life.

PRAVDIN: But having married her off, it would not be too much to provide for her children also.

STARODUM: Children? To leave a fortune to children! I have no such thought. If they are clever, they will get along without it; and to a stupid son riches are of no avail. I have seen many young chaps in kaftans of gold brocade, but with leaden heads. No, my friend! Ready cash is not real merit. A gilded fool is a fool none the less.

PRAVDIN: But then we see that money often leads to high position, and that high rank usually is followed by distinction, and that distinction calls for due respect.

STARODUM: Respect! The only kind of respect that should flatter a man is that which springs from the heart. And sincere respect is due only to a man who has won high rank by other things than money, and who has won distinction by other means than rank.

PRAVDIN: Your conclusion is indisputable.

STARODUM: Hey! What's all this noise about?

SCENE III

The same and MRS. PROSTAKOV, SKOTININ and MILON

MILON *separates* MRS. PROSTAKOV *from* SKOTININ.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Let me go! Let me go, sir! Let me get at his mug, his mug!

MILON: I can't let you go, madam. I am sorry!

SKOTININ (*furiously, straightening his wig*): Get away with you, sister! If it comes to blows, I'll bend you till you squeak!

MILON (*to* MRS. PROSTAKOV): And you have forgotten that he is your brother?

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Oh, my dear sir! I'm mad; just let me finish the fight.

MILON (*to* SKOTININ): Isn't she your sister?

SKOTININ: I might as well admit it—of the same dung; just listen how she squeals.

STARODUM (*bursts out laughing, to* PRAVDIN): I was afraid I might get angry, but I really can't help laughing.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Who's that? Laugh at whom? Who's this stranger?

STARODUM: Don't be angry, madam! I haven't seen anything so funny in all my life.

SKOTININ (*rubbing his neck*): Easy for him to laugh—I can't even grin!

MILON: Did she strike you?

SKOTININ: I covered my face with both my hands. So she got at my back.

MILON: Does it hurt?

SKOTININ: Yes, she clawed my neck a bit.

(*During the course of MRS. PROSTAKOV'S next speech SOPHIA, with her eyes, tells MILON that he is looking at STARODUM. MILON understands her.*)

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Clawed? No, dear brother, you must offer prayers for the officer. Except for him, you would not have escaped me. I shall defend my son, and I shan't spare even my own father. (*To* STARODUM.): This, sir, is no laughing matter, I can tell you. Unfortunately I have a mother's heart. Have you ever heard of a dog that gave up her puppies? As for you—you've intruded upon us; nobody knows who you are, or what you want.

STARODUM (*pointing to* SOPHIA): Her uncle, Starodum, has come to see her.

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*timidly, frightened*): What? So it's you! You, sir! Our precious guest! Oh, what a luckless fool I am! Is it fitting to welcome our dear father in such a way? All our hope depends on him! He is all we have; he's the apple of my eye. Father dear! Forgive me! I am a fool. I am dazed! Where is my husband? Where is my son? You seem to have walked into an empty house! The Lord's scourge is on us! Everybody's crazy! Palashka, come here I tell you! Palashka!

SKOTININ (*aside*): Well, well! So there he is, that precious uncle! Eh?

SCENE IV

The same and YEREMEYEVNA

YEREMEYEVNA: What do you wish?

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Is your name Palashka, you slut? Haven't I got any other women in this house besides you with your dirty mug? Where's Palashka?

YEREMEYEVNA: She's ill, mistress; she's been in bed since morning.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: In bed! Oh, the trollop! In bed! Just like a lady!

YEREMEYEVNA: She has a high fever, mistress; she's raving, she talks nonsense.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Raving! Oh! the hussy! Just like a lady too! Go fetch my husband and son. Tell them that, thanks be to the Lord, we have a visit from the uncle of our charming little Sophie. Well, get off with you! Hurry—get a move on you, can't you?

STARODUM: Why all this fuss, madam, when, thank the Lord, I am no kinsman of yours; in fact, thank the Lord again, I'm not acquainted with you at all.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Your unexpected arrival, kind sir, has struck me dumb; do let me give you a good hug, our lord and benefactor!

SCENE V

*The same, Mr. PROSTAKOV, MITROFAN, and YEREMEYEVNA**During the following speech of STARODUM, Mr. PROSTAKOV and his son come in through the middle door, and take their places behind him. The father is ready to embrace him just as soon as his turn comes, and the son is ready to kiss his hand. YEREMEYEVNA stands at one side, clasping her hands, and staring at STARODUM with slavish servility.*STARODUM (*unwillingly embracing Mrs. PROSTAKOV*): This honor is quite unnecessary, madam! I could have done without it very easily! (*Escaping from her embraces, he turns around to the other side, where SKOTININ, waiting with his arms open, immediately seizes him.*)

STARODUM: Who has caught me now?

SKOTININ: This is me, my sister's brother.

STARODUM (*seeing two more, with impatience*): And these? Who are they?

| | |
|---|-------------|
| Mr. PROSTAKOV (<i>embracing him</i>): I am my wife's husband. | } Together. |
| MITROFAN (<i>catching STARODUM's hand</i>): And I am mamma's sonny. | |

MILON (*to PRAVDIN*): I won't introduce myself now.

PRAVDIN (*to MILON*): I'll find a moment to introduce you later.

STARODUM (*not giving his hand to MITROFAN*): This fellow is trying to kiss my hand. It's clear they are making a fine man of him.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Speak to him, Mitrofanushka, say: "Why can't I kiss your hand, sir? You are my second father."

MITROFAN: Why not kiss your hand, dear uncle? . . . You are my . . . my father. . . . (*To his mother.*) Uh, which one?

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Second.

MITROFAN: Second? . . . Second father, uncle.

STARODUM: Sir, I am neither your father nor your uncle.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: My dear sir, perhaps the child foretells his own happiness; maybe, with God's help he will indeed become your nephew.

SKOTININ: Well! Am I not good enough for a nephew? Hey, sister!

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Brother, I do not want to have words with you. (*To STARODUM.*) Never in my life, my dear sir, have I quarreled with anybody. Such is my nature. Even if you swear at me, I shall never utter a word. Let him be as he is; the Lord will punish any man who does me wrong, poor *me*!

STARODUM: I noticed that, madam, just as soon as you appeared at the door.

PRAVDIN: And I have been witnessing her sweet temper for three days.

STARODUM: I can't stand such fun very long. Sophie, my dear, to-morrow morning we are leaving for Moscow.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Ah! Kind sir! Why such displeasure?

MR. PROSTAKOV: Why such cruelty?

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Why? We—to part with Sophie! With our bosom friend! I shall lose my appetite from grief!

MR. PROSTAKOV: And I am done for right now, on the spot.

STARODUM: Oh! If you love her so much, I want you to hear the good news. I am taking her to Moscow to make her happy there. A certain young man of great merits has been introduced to me as her suitor. I shall marry her to him.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Oh, Lord! He's killing me!

MILON: What do I hear?

(*SOPHIA seems to be overwhelmed.*)

SKOTININ: A nice thing, indeed!

(*MR. PROSTAKOV raises his hands.*)

MITROFAN: There you have it!

(*YEREMEYEVNA sadly shakes her head.*)

(*PRAVDIN shows that he is unpleasantly surprised.*)

} Together.

STARODUM (*noticing the general agitation*): What does this mean? (*To SOPHIA.*) Sophie, my dear, it seems to me that you are dismayed too. Is it possible that my plan has made you unhappy? I want to take your father's place. Trust me, I know his duties. They will go no farther than to prevent an unfortunate match, and the choice of a worthy man will depend entirely upon your own heart. Calm yourself, my dear! Your husband, if worthy of you, no matter who he may be, will find a true friend in me. Marry whomsoever you like.

(*Everybody looks hopeful.*)

SOPHIA: Uncle, dear, don't doubt that I shall obey you!

MILON (*aside*): An honorable man!

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*with a cheerful countenance*): That's a father! Just listen! Marry whomsoever she likes, if the man is worthy of her! That's right, my dear sir; that's right! But one must take care not to overlook eligible suitors. If there is a nobleman before you, a fine young fellow—

SKOTININ: Who is no longer a child—

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Who has means, though modest—

SKOTININ: And a good-sized piggery—

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Well and good then, it's just the proper time to visit the Archangel's church. } *Together.*

SKOTININ: A merry feast follows the wedding.

STARODUM: Your counsels are disinterested, I see.

SKOTININ: Wait, this is only a small part of what you'll see when we get better acquainted. Here, look what a terrific uproar! In about an hour I'll come to you by myself. And then we can settle our little business. I tell you without boasting: such men as I am, are very rare. (*Walks away.*)

STARODUM: That's very likely.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: As for you, dear sir, don't be surprised that my own brother—

STARODUM: Your own?

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Yes, sir. You see, on my father's side I belong to the Skotinin family. My deceased father married my deceased mother, and her maiden name was Prolific. Altogether, they had eighteen of us children, but all except my brother and I, all—by the Lord's will—passed away. Some were found dead in the bath. Three died after drinking milk from a brass bowl. Two fell down from the belfry during Holy Week; and the rest—well, they just didn't live, my dear sir.

STARODUM: I see what kind of people your parents were.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: They were old-fashioned people, my lord! Times were different then. We were taught nothing. Kind-hearted people used to coax and coax my father to send my brother to school. To no avail. He, our beloved—peace be with him!—just raised a rumpus. He used to shout: "I shall disown the child who ever learns anything from those heretics, and let him not be a Skotinin if he wants to learn anything."

PRAVDIN: You, however, are teaching your son something or other.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: But times have changed now, my dear sir! (To STARODUM.) We don't spare our scanty means to teach our son everything. My Mitrofanushka stays at his books all day long. I have a mother's heart. Sometimes I am sorry for him, sorry, but then I think: "He will be a smart young chap." Just imagine, my lord; he will be sixteen on St. Nicholas' day next winter. He is not a bad match already; the teachers still come to him, they don't waste an hour; even now two are waiting in the hall. (*Winks to YEREMEYEVNA to call them.*) In Moscow we hired a foreigner for five years; and, fearing that others might lure him away, we made him sign a legal contract. He agreed to teach everything we wanted; but as far as we are concerned, he might teach anything he knew. We have done our parental duty, have taken in the German, and are paying him a third in advance. It is my heartiest wish that you, dear sir, would examine Mitrofanushka and find out what he has learned.

STARODUM: I am a poor judge in such matters, madam!

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*sees KUTEYKIN and CIPHERKIN*): Here they are, the teachers! Didn't I tell you, sir, that my Mitrofanushka has no peace, day or night. It is bad to praise one's own child, but the girl, who, the Lord willing, becomes his wife, won't be unhappy with him.

PRAVDIN: This is all well enough, madam, but don't forget that your guest has just come from Moscow, and that he needs rest much more than to hear praises of your son.

STARODUM: I must admit, I should like to rest a little from my trip and from all I have heard and seen.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Ah, my dear sir! Everything is ready. I have fixed your room myself.

STARODUM: Thank you! Sophie dear, won't you take me there?

MRS. PROSTAKOV: What about us? Please, sir, let me and my son and my husband escort you. We all promise to go on foot to Kiev to pray for your health, if only our little business may be settled.

STARODUM (*to PRAVDIN*): When may I see you? I'll come here after my nap.

PRAVDIN: Then I shall have the honor of seeing you here.

STARODUM: I am sincerely glad. (*Noticing MILON, who bows respectfully, he bows pleasantly in return.*)

MRS. PROSTAKOV: So this way, please!

(*All but the teachers go out. PRAVDIN and MILON go in one direction, and the rest in the other.*)

SCENE VI

KUTEYKIN and CIPHERKIN

KUTEYKIN: What the devil! Since this morning I haven't been able to make head or tail of anything. Here each morning it flourisheth and withereth.

CIPHERKIN: And we fellows live that way all our life long. We don't work, but we don't run away from work. It's a real disaster to us chaps if the grub is no good. To-day the food in this house ran out before dinner was over.

KUTEYKIN: Had not the Lord given me the wisdom, when I was on my way here, to call on the woman who bakes our communion bread, I should have been hungry as a dog before evening.

CIPHERKIN: These here masters are good at commanding.

KUTEYKIN: Have you heard, brother, what a dog's life the servants live here? Though thou art a man of war and hast been in battles, fear and trembling will overcome thee.

CIPHERKIN: There you are! Haven't I heard? Why, I myself saw a constant bombardment here for three solid hours at a stretch one day. (*Sighing.*) Oh, poor me! It makes me sad.

KUTEYKIN (*sighing*): Ah, woe unto me, a sinner!

CIPHERKIN: What are you sighing for, Sidorych?

KUTEYKIN: Your soul, too, is disquieted within you, Pafnutyich?

CIPHERKIN: I can't help thinking: the Lord has given me a pupil, a nobleman's son. I have been struggling with him three years; he can't even count up to three.

KUTEYKIN: Then have we one grief in common. It is my fourth year of suffering. Even to this day, except for the review lessons, he can't read a single line; and even those he mumbles the Lord knoweth how, syllable by syllable and without any sense.

CIPHERKIN: And who is to blame? Just as soon as he takes his slate, the German appears. There's the end to the slate, and the end of me.

KUTEYKIN: Is it my sin? Just as soon as I have the pointer in my hands, the heretic is in sight. He pats the pupil and kicks me.

CIPHERKIN (*hotly*): I'd be willing to have my ear cut off, if only

I could give that good-for-nothing sluggard a bit of military schooling.

KUTEYKIN: I should not murmur at a whipping if I could but hit that sinful neck a good whack!

SCENE VII

The same, MRS. PROSTAKOV and MITROFAN

MRS. PROSTAKOV: While he is resting, my darling, just pretend that you are studying, so that it may reach his ears how hard you work, Mitrofanushka.

MITROFAN: Well, and then what?

MRS. PROSTAKOV: And then you will marry.

MITROFAN: Well, listen, mother dear: I'll do it just to please you. I'll study; but this must be the last time, and the betrothal must be to-day.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: The time of the Lord's will will come!

MITROFAN: The time of my own will has come. I don't want to study, I want to marry. You yourself coaxed me on; now blame yourself. See, I am at the desk.

(CIPHERKIN sharpens the slate pencil.)

MRS. PROSTAKOV: And I will stay here too. I'll knit a purse for you, my darling! This is where you will keep Sophia's money.

MITROFAN: Well then, hand me that slate, you garrison rat! Go on, what shall I write?

CIPHERKIN: Your Honor, you always call names with no reason at all.

MRS. PROSTAKOV *(knitting)*: Ah, dear Lord! May not the child even abuse Pafnutyich a little! Now you are angry.

CIPHERKIN: Angry! What for, your Honor? We have a proverb in Russia: "The dog barks, but the wind bears it away."

MITROFAN: Well, why don't you give me the review lesson? Hurry up!

CIPHERKIN: Always the review lessons, your Honor! With only those lessons you will lag behind all your life.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: None of your business, Pafnutyich. I am much pleased that Mitrofanushka does not like to hurry too much. With his brain, if he goes too fast, God help him!

CIPHERKIN: Write down this problem: You, for example, walk along the road with me. Let's take Sidorych too. We three found—

MITROFAN *(writes)*: "Three."

CIPHERKIN: On the road, say, three hundred rubles.

MITROFAN *(writes)*: "Three hundred."

CIPHERKIN: Then it was time to divide. Now reckon how much each fellow got.

MITROFAN (*figuring, writes*): Once three is three, once naught is naught, once naught is naught.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: And what about the dividing?

MITROFAN: You see, the three hundred rubles they found, we must divide among the three.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: He's a liar, my darling! If you find money, don't share it with anybody. Take it all yourself, Mitrofanushka! Don't learn this stupid science.

MITROFAN: Do you hear, Pafnutyich? Give me another.

CIPHERKIN: Write down, your Honor. You give me ten rubles a year for instruction—

MITROFAN: Ten.

CIPHERKIN: Now, it's true, there's nothing to pay for; but if the young master had learned something from me, it would not be sinful to give ten more.

MITROFAN (*writes*): Well, well, "ten."

CIPHERKIN: And how much will it make a year?

MITROFAN (*adding, whispers*): Naught plus naught is naught. One plus one— (*Thinks hard.*)

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Don't work so hard over a trifle, my dear! I shall not give him a kopek more; no reason why I should. It's not much of a science. It's only tormenting you; and the whole business, I see, is just rubbish. If you have no money, why count it? If you have money, we can add it up well enough without Pafnutyich's help.

KUTEYKIN: Enough, Pafnutyich, verily. Two problems are solved; and then, no man will ever want to check them up.

MITROFAN: Have no fear, brother! My mamma won't make mistakes. Now you, Kuteykin, come on! Teach me the same as yesterday.

KUTEYKIN (*opens a Prayer Book; MITROFAN takes the pointer*): Let us begin, praise be to the Lord! Now, follow me carefully. . . .

"I am a worm."

MITROFAN: "I am a worm."

KUTEYKIN: A worm, that is to say, an insect, a beast. That is to say, "I am a beast."

MITROFAN: "I am a beast."

KUTEYKIN (*with an authoritative tone*): "And not a man."

MITROFAN (*in the same tone*): "And not a man."

KUTEYKIN: "A disgrace to men."

MITROFAN: "A disgrace to men."

KUTEYKIN: "And a humi—"

SCENE VIII

The same, and VRALMAN

VRALMAN: Ay, ay, ay, ay! Now I see! they voot be for killing the chilt! Liddle modder! Take peety of your own boozom. For nine monts haf you borne him—him who is, so to speak, the eight vunder in the vorlt. Joost gif once free rein to dose peggardy rascals. *Mit* such a brain it vont tak long to turn his *kopf*. Such a dispozeeshun already he has.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: It's true, indeed. You're right, Adam Adamych. Mitrofanushka, my darling, if learning is so dangerous for your brain, it seems to me you'd better stop it.

MITROFAN: I think so too; you bet.

KUTEYKIN (*closing the Prayer Book*): The end, and, thank the Lord, amen!

VRALMAN: My liddle modder! Vat else do you vant? Your son is such as he iss—the Lord give him healt. And if sonny is too wise, say, like Aristotle, he vill soon be in his grafe.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Oh, horrors, Adam Adamych! Lord save him, dear Adam Adamych! Last night at supper he didn't eat any too carefully.

VRALMAN: You see, liddle modder, for yourself, too full he stuffed his tummy, and it's not goot. But his *kopf* is much weaker as his tummy, and eef it is oferstuffed, den Lort be merciful to us!

MRS. PROSTAKOV: You are right, Adam Adamych; but what will you do? If the child does not study, when he comes to St. Petersburg they'll say he is a fool. Nowadays there are too many clever men. I'm afraid of them.

VRALMAN: Vy afrait of dem, modder? A clefer man vill never pick a quarrel *mit* him, and he vill never discourse. He must have nussing to do *mit* dose clefer men, and den it geefs ze Lord's blessink.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: See, Mitrofanushka, this is how you must live.

MITROFAN: I'm not so keen about clever people myself, mother; my own kind is always better.

VRALMAN: Jah! Dat's ze sing, your own mate is better.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: But where will you find her, Adam Adamych?

VRALMAN: Don't grief, my liddle modder, don't vorry; zere are millions and millions like your precious sonny. He can fint a vife for himself.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Not for nothing is he my son. A bright chap; he's quick too.

VRALMAN: Zat is easy to say, but vat if zis learning kills him?

Russian grammar! Aritmetic! Oh, dear Lort, it's a *wunder* zat he keeps body and soul togezer! As if a Russian nopleman cannot advance in zis vorlt vizout Russian grammar!

KUTEYKIN (*aside*): Let thy tongue be struck dumb!

VRALMAN: As if people vere fools before dere vas any aritmetic.

CIPHERKIN (*aside*): I'll count your ribs yet. Just wait till I catch you.

VRALMAN: He must know how to leef in dis vorlt. I know the vorlt by heart. I myself have learnt visdom.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: No wonder you do know the great world, Adam Adamych. I guess in St. Petersburg alone you must have seen a lot.

VRALMAN: Enough, my dear modder, enough. I vas always font of seeing ze people. On holidays, ze carriages full of noplemen used to come to Ekaterinhoff. Always I look at zem. Sometimes I voot nefer get off ze coach box. . . .

MRS. PROSTAKOV: What coach box?

VRALMAN (*aside*): Ay, ay, ay, ay! Vat am I saying? (*Aloud.*) You know, modder, it is easier to see ven one is standing higher, and I used to sit in my frient's carriage and vatch ze great society from ze coach box.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: To be sure, one can see better. A clever man knows what he's about.

VRALMAN: And your precious son, too, vill somehow manage to see ze society and show himself off. A prave poy!

(MITROFAN *stands and fidgets.*)

VRALMAN: A prave poy! He can't stay kvietly a minute, like a frisky colt vidout a pridle! Go ahead! be off quickly!

(MITROFAN *runs away.*)

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*smiling joyously*): Even if he is about to marry, he is still a child. I must go, just the same, and see that his friskiness doesn't unintentionally provoke our guest.

VRALMAN: Go, my liddle modder! Vat a birt! You must keep an eye on him.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Good-by, Adam Adamych. (*She goes out.*)

SCENE IX

VRALMAN, KUTEYKIN and CIPHERKIN

CIPHERKIN (*grinning*): What a pill!

KUTEYKIN (*grinning*): A byword among the heathen.

VRALMAN: Vy do you grin, you clots?

CIPHERKIN (*slapping his shoulder*): And why do you scowl, you Finnish owl!

VRALMAN: Oy, oy, iron paws!

KUTEYKIN (*slapping his back*): You cussed owl! Why are your goggles blinking so?

VRALMAN (*whispering*): I'm done for. (*Aloud.*) Vy are you fellows making fun of me?

CIPHERKIN: You eat your bread for nothing, and won't let the others work: just wait, you won't stare so.

KUTEYKIN: Your lips speak always of pride, you heretic.

VRALMAN (*recovering from fright*): How dare you to treat a learned person so rudely? I'll cry for help.

CIPHERKIN: And we shall bid you good-by—I with a slate!

KUTEYKIN: And I with my Prayer Book!

VRALMAN: I'll tell my mistress on you!

(CIPHERKIN *lifts the slate*, and KUTEYKIN *the Prayer Book.*)

CIPHERKIN: I'll smash your snout to pieces!

KUTEYKIN: I will break the teeth of the ungodly man! } *Together.*

(VRALMAN *runs.*)

CIPHERKIN: Aha! The coward takes to his heels.

KUTEYKIN: Haste with thy feet, accursed man!

VRALMAN (*in the doorway*): Dit you get the pest of me, hey, you rascals! Joost dare come in here!

CIPHERKIN: Escaped! We'd have given you all that's coming to you!

VRALMAN: I ain't afraid of nussing now. I ain't afraid!

KUTEYKIN: The lawless man hath found a refuge. Are there many more of your breed, heretics like you? Send all of them down here!

VRALMAN: You couldn't do nussing *mit* one! Hey? Vat! } *All*

Did you vin? Hey? } *shout*

CIPHERKIN: I'll make short work of ten of them all by } *to-*

KUTEYKIN: In the morning shall I slay all the sinners of } *gether.*

the earth!

ACT IV

SCENE I

SOPHIA (*alone, looking at the clock*): Uncle will surely come out soon. (*Sitting down.*) I'll wait for him here. (*Takes a book, reads a little.*) It is certainly true. One can't help being happy if one's conscience is clear! (*Continues reading.*) One can't help loving the

rules of virtue. They are the means of happiness. (*After reading a little more, she looks up, sees STARODUM, and rushes to him.*)

SCENE II

SOPHIA and STARODUM

STARODUM: Ah: you are already here, my sweetheart!

SOPHIA: I have been waiting for you, uncle dear! I have been reading a book.

STARODUM: What is it?

SOPHIA: French, Fénelon, on the education of girls.

STARODUM: Fénelon? The author of *Télémaque*? That's good. I don't know your book, but go on reading it. The man who wrote *Télémaque* can't corrupt morals with his pen. Nowadays on your account I am afraid of these clever men. I happen to have read all of their works that are in Russian translations. It's true they are destroying many superstitions; but then, they are uprooting virtue. Let's sit down. (*Both sit down.*) My heartfelt wish is to see you as happy as you can possibly be in this world.

SOPHIA: All my happiness depends upon your guidance, my dear uncle. Please give me the rules which I should follow. Guide my heart. It is willing to obey you.

STARODUM: I am pleased with your disposition. I shall be very glad to give you my advice. Listen to me with an attention equal to my own sincerity. Come nearer. (*SOPHIA draws up her chair.*)

SOPHIA: Dear uncle! Every word of yours will be deeply engraved on my heart.

STARODUM (*with solemn frankness*): At your age the mind takes the utmost delight in everything, the reason desires to know, and the heart to feel! You are now entering the world, where the first step often decides the fate of a whole life, where one often finds for the first time minds with corrupt ideas, hearts with corrupt emotions. Oh, my dear! Learn to discriminate, learn to find those whose friendship offers sure guidance for your mind and heart.

SOPHIA: I shall try my best to deserve a good opinion of worthy people. But how shall I escape the spite of those who will see that I am avoiding them? Is it not possible, uncle, to find means to keep everybody in the world from wishing me harm?

STARODUM: The spiteful disposition of people unworthy of respect must not distress you. Remember that nobody wishes ill to those who are despised; usually evil wishes are directed against those who have a right to despise others. People envy not only riches or distinction;

even virtue has its enemies. They try their best to corrupt an innocent heart in order to bring it down to their own level; they lure the inexperienced mind to search for happiness elsewhere than where it should be found.

SOPHIA: I thought, uncle, that all people agreed as to what constitutes happiness. Social position, riches. . . .

STARODUM: Quite right, my dear! And I am willing to call a rich nobleman a happy man. But first let us decide who is noble and who is rich. I have my own reckoning. The ranks of nobility I count by the number of deeds which the distinguished man has performed for his fatherland, and not by the amount of work he has taken on himself because of his arrogance; not by the number of servants idling in his hall, but by the number of people pleased with his work and conduct. My nobleman is, of course, happy. And my rich man too. In my reckoning that man is not rich who counts his money merely to lay it away in his coffers—rather the man who sets aside his surplus in order to help those who are in want.

SOPHIA: Is it possible that such simple truths are not felt in every heart? Why does not everybody reflect on them? Where then is the intellect of which men are so proud?

STARODUM: Why should one be proud of having intellect, my dear? Intellect, if it is naught but intellect, is merely a trifle. We see bad husbands, bad fathers, bad citizens endowed with acute intellects. The value of the mind depends upon virtue. Without virtue, without morals, a clever man is a monster. Virtue is incomparably higher than any acuteness of the mind. This is easily understood by anybody who really thinks about such things. There are many, many different kinds of intellect. A clever man may be easily excused if he lacks a certain quality of intellect; but an honorable man cannot be forgiven if any one property of soul is missing from his heart. He simply must have all of them. The merit of one's heart is indivisible. An honorable man must be absolutely honorable.

SOPHIA: Your explanation, uncle, accords with my own inner feeling, which I have been unable to express. Now I vividly appreciate both the worth of an honorable man and his duty.

STARODUM: Duty! Ah, my dear! That word is so often spoken, but so little understood! The word has become so familiar to us through constant use that when he utters it a man neither thinks nor feels anything whatsoever. And yet, if men only understood its true dignity, no one could ever utter it without profound respect. Only think what duty means! It is the sacred pledge by which we are bound to all those with whom we live and upon whom we depend. If men really did their duty in the way they assert, each class of men would

abide within its own sphere of action, and would be completely happy. A nobleman, for instance, would deem it most dishonorable to do nothing when there is so much to be done, when there are people in need of help, when there is the fatherland which needs his service. Then there would be no nobleman whose nobility was buried, so to speak, with his ancestors. A nobleman! Unworthy of his name! I do not know anything in the whole world more vile!

SOPHIA: Can one possibly debase one's self to such an extent?

STARODUM: My dear! Let us apply what I have said of a nobleman to man in general. Every one has his duties. Let us see how they are fulfilled. See, for instance, what most of the husbands are like in our present society, and let us not forget the wives either. Oh, my child! Now I need all your attention. Let us take an unhappy family—there are a great many of them—in which a wife has no friendly feelings for her husband, nor he any confidence in his wife; where both parties have deviated from the path of virtue. Instead of a sincere and lenient friend, the wife beholds in her husband a rude and corrupt tyrant. On the other hand, instead of gentleness and straightforwardness, which are the attributes of a virtuous wife, the husband finds in her soul only a self-willed brazenness, and brazenness in a woman is a sign of immoral conduct. Each has become an intolerable burden to the other. Neither cares any longer about a good name because it has already been lost to them. Could anything be more abhorrent than the situation they are in? Their house is desolate. The servants, seeing that their master himself is a slave to base passions, cease to obey. The estate is going to ruin: it has become nobody's property, just as its master no longer belongs to himself. The children, their unhappy children, have become orphans with their father and mother still living. The father, having no respect for his wife, hardly ventures to caress them, hardly ventures to yield to the most tender emotions of the human heart. The innocent little mites are likewise deprived of their mother's love. She, unworthy of having any children, avoids their caresses, seeing in them either the cause of her discomforts, or a reproach for her corrupt life. And what upbringing can the children expect from a mother who has lost her virtue? How can she teach them morals when she herself has none? At those moments when husband and wife reflect upon their situation, through what a veritable hell their souls must go!

SOPHIA: Oh, heavens! Why such horrible misfortunes?

STARODUM: Because, my dear, in present-day marriages the heart is rarely consulted. The main thing is whether the suitor is rich and of noble birth, or whether the bride is rich and beautiful. There is no question about virtue. Nobody ever thinks that a simple honest

man is, in the eyes of wise men, a noble personage even without any high position; that virtue replaces everything, and that nothing can take its place. I must admit, my dear, that my heart will only be at peace when I see you married to a man worthy of your heart, and when your mutual love—

SOPHIA: How can one help loving a worthy husband as a friend?

STARODUM: Yes. But I would much rather not have you love your husband with an affection that resembles friendship—it is better to have friendship for him which resembles love. That will be far more lasting. Then, after twenty years of your married life, you both will find in your hearts the same fondness for each other. A prudent husband! A virtuous wife! What can be more worthy of respect! It is necessary that your husband obey his reason, and you must obey your husband, and then both of you will be quite happy.

SOPHIA: All that you say touches my heart.

STARODUM (*ardently and tenderly*): I am delighted to see your depth of sentiment. Your happiness depends upon yourself. God has endowed you with all the charms of your sex. I see in you the heart of a woman of honor. You, my darling, combine the perfections of both sexes. I flatter myself that my enthusiasm does not deceive me, and that virtue—

SOPHIA: You have filled my whole being with it. (*Rushes to kiss his hands.*) Where is it?

STARODUM (*kissing her hands*): It is in your soul. I thank God that in your own self I find a secure foundation for your happiness. It will not depend upon nobility or riches. All this may come to you; but for you there is much more happiness than all this. Such happiness consists in feeling oneself worthy of all the good one is enjoying.

SOPHIA: Uncle, dear! My real happiness is that I have you. I know the worth—

SCENE III

The same and VALET

VALET *hands a letter to STARODUM.*

STARODUM: Where is it from?

VALET: From Moscow, by a messenger. (*He goes out.*)

STARODUM (*opening the letter, looks at the signature*): Count Chestan! Ah! (*Starts reading it, but shows by his manner that he cannot see well.*) Sophie! My glasses are on the desk, in the book.

SOPHIA (*goes out*): Just a minute, uncle!

SCENE IV

STARODUM (*alone*): He writes me, of course, on the same business about which he spoke in Moscow. I don't know Milon; but since his uncle is my sincere friend, since everybody regards him as a worthy and honest man . . . if her heart is free . . .

SCENE V

STARODUM and SOPHIA

SOPHIA (*handing him the glasses*): Here they are, uncle.

STARODUM (*reading*): "I have just found out . . . he is leading his squadron to Moscow. . . . He is sure to meet you on the way. . . . I shall be very glad if he makes your acquaintance. . . . Will you not take the trouble to discover the drift of his thoughts?" (*Aside.*) Of course. . . . I won't give her to him otherwise. . . . "You will find . . . Your sincere friend . . ." Very well. This letter concerns you. I have told you that a young man of a praiseworthy character has been brought forward. . . . My words embarrass you, my dear. I noticed this a little while ago, and I see it clearly now. Your confidence in me—

SOPHIA: Can I have secrets from you? No, uncle. I'll tell you frankly.

SCENE VI

The same, PRAVDIN and MILON

PRAVDIN: May I introduce my good friend, Mr. Milon?

STARODUM (*aside*): Milon!

MILON: I shall be very happy if I can deserve your good opinion of me, and your favor.

STARODUM: Count Chestan, isn't he a relative of yours?

MILON: He is my uncle.

STARODUM: I am pleased to have met a man of your merits. . . . Your uncle has spoken to me about you. He does you full justice. And particular merits—

MILON: It's very kind of him. For a person of my age and station it would be inexcusable pride to take as his due all that worthy men may say to encourage a young man.

PRAVDIN: I am certain beforehand that you will like my friend after you have known him better. He used to come often to your late sister's. (STARODUM looks at SOPHIA.)

SOPHIA (*whispers timidly to STARODUM*): And my mother loved him as her own son.

STARODUM (*to SOPHIA*): I am very glad. (*To MILON.*) I have heard that you have served in the army. Your valor—

MILON: I have only done my duty. As yet nothing—neither my years, my rank, nor my station—has given me a chance to show real valor, or to prove whether I have it or not.

STARODUM: Why! Being in the midst of a battle, and risking your life—

MILON: I risked my life just like other soldiers. Over there courage is so natural a quality that a private displays it because he is ordered by his chief, and an officer does the bidding of his sense of honor. I admit quite frankly that I have not had a chance really to show my valor, and I sincerely wish to give myself a trial.

STARODUM: I am curious to know what you mean by real valor.

MILON: Then, with your permission, I will make myself clear. I think that real valor comes from the soul and not from the heart. He who has it within his soul has, undoubtedly, a courageous heart also. In our military profession a private must be courageous, and his chief—valorous. He must have that *sang froid* which enables him to foresee all kinds of dangers and to take precautions against them. He is ready to sacrifice his life for the sake of his own glory; but, what is more, for the sake of his country and its glory he is willing to forget his own fame. His valor, consequently, does not mean that he holds his own life in contempt—he never risks it unnecessarily, but he knows how to sacrifice it.

STARODUM: That is quite just. So you think real valor belongs to the military leader. Is it possible for other classes also to have it?

MILON: It is a virtue; therefore, there is no class which might not be distinguished for it. A courageous spirit, it seems to me, is proved on the battlefield, but a valorous spirit may be exhibited in all trials, in all situations of life. And what a difference there is between the fearlessness of a soldier, who during an assault risks his life together with other men, and the valor of a statesman who tells the truth to the tsar, daring to face the tsar's disfavor! A judge who is not intimidated by threats of revenge from the higher authorities and who metes out justice to the helpless is, in my opinion, a hero. When a man provokes a duel for a trifling cause, how petty his soul appears to those who are defending an absent man whose honor is being assailed in their presence by blackguards! Such is my conception of valor.

STARODUM: Such should be the conception of a man who has it in his own soul. Embrace me, my dear friend! Forgive my simplicity. I am a friend of honorable men. This attitude was implanted in me by my

upbringing. In you I find virtue adorned with enlightened reason, and I respect it.

MILON: O noble soul! No, I can no longer hide the feelings of my heart. No! Your virtue forces from me the inmost secret of my soul. If I have a virtuous heart, if it deserves happiness, then it depends upon you to make it happy. For me happiness is possible only if I may have your charming niece for my wife. Our mutual affection—

STARODUM (*joyfully, to SOPHIA*): What! Your heart knew how to find the man whom I myself had chosen for you? There, you have your fiancé!

SOPHIA: I love him deeply.

STARODUM: You are worthy of each other. (*Enraptured, he joins their hands.*) I give my consent from the very depths of my soul.

MILON (*embracing STARODUM*): My happiness is incomparable.

SOPHIA (*kissing STARODUM's hands*): Who can be happier than I? } *Together.*

PRAVDIN: I am sincerely happy.

STARODUM: I cannot express my pleasure.

MILON (*kissing SOPHIA's hand*): This is the moment of our blessedness!

SOPHIA: My heart will love you always.

SCENE VII

The same and SKOTININ

SKOTININ: Well, here I am.

STARODUM: What did you come for?

SKOTININ: For a personal matter.

STARODUM: What can I do for you?

SKOTININ: Just say three words.

STARODUM: What are they?

SKOTININ: Embrace me tightly and say: "Sophie is yours."

STARODUM: Aren't you starting something rash? Better think it over!

SKOTININ: I never think things over, and I am sure beforehand that if you don't start thinking either, then Sophie is mine.

STARODUM: What a strange notion! I can see that you are not stupid. Then why do you expect me to give my niece to you—to you whom I don't know at all?

SKOTININ: If you don't, then I'll tell you. I am Taras Skotinin, and not the least among my kin. The Skotinins are of noble and ancient

descent. The founder of our race lived before there were any books of heraldry.

PRAVDIN (*laughing*): In this way you will perhaps convince us that your ancestor was older than Adam himself.

SKOTININ: Well, what do you think about it? Maybe just a little older.

STARODUM (*laughing*): That is, your ancestor was created, say, on the sixth day, and still a little ahead of Adam?

SKOTININ: Now, really? Are you in earnest about my family's ancient origin?

STARODUM: Oh, of course, and I am only wondering how you, for your part, can look for a wife among any other family than the Skotinins.

SKOTININ: Do you realize how fortunate it is for Sophia to marry me. She belongs only to the later nobility.

STARODUM: Oh, what a man! Don't you see, that's why you are no match for her.

SKOTININ: Here's my point: let them say that Skotinin has married just a little gentlewoman. That doesn't bother me.

STARODUM: But it will bother her, when they say that a gentlewoman married Skotinin.

MILON: Such an ill match would make both of you unhappy.

SKOTININ: Bah! What's this fellow meddling here for? (*Whispering to STARODUM.*) Hey, is he trying to beat me off?

STARODUM (*whispering to SKOTININ*): It seems so to me.

SKOTININ (*in the same tone*): But how? The deuce take him!

STARODUM (*in the same tone*): It's too bad.

SKOTININ (*aloud, pointing to MILON*): Which of us two looks ridiculous? Ha, ha, ha, ha!

STARODUM (*laughs*): I see who is ridiculous.

SOPHIA: Uncle, dear! I am so happy to see you in a gay mood.

SKOTININ (*to STARODUM*): Pshaw! So you are a jolly old fellow after all! And I thought a while ago that there was no way of approach to you. You wouldn't say a word to me, and now you are even laughing with me.

STARODUM: Such is man, my friend—changeable always.

SKOTININ: Yes, I see this much now. But a while ago I was the same Skotinin, and yet you were angry then.

STARODUM: There was a reason.

SKOTININ: I know it. I am like you in that respect myself. At home, when I enter a pigsty, I find things out of order, and it just makes me wretched. And you—this is just between the two of us—

came here and found my sister's home not much better than my pigpens; and naturally you were irritated.

STARODUM: You are luckier than I. *People* touch my emotions.

SKOTININ: And *pigs*—mine.

SCENE VIII

The same, MRS. PROSTAKOV, MR. PROSTAKOV, MITROFAN and YEREMEYEVNA

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*entering*): Have you everything with you, Mitrofanushka?

MITROFAN: Oh, quit fussing.

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*to STARODUM*): Did you have a nice rest, my dear sir? We all walked on our tiptoes, three rooms away, for fear we should disturb you; we dared not peep in through the door; and then we heard that you had come out here some time ago. Forgive us, honored sir!

STARODUM: Oh, madam, I should have been very much provoked had you come in here earlier.

SKOTININ: And you, sister, seem to follow my steps just for fun. I came here on a personal matter.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: I have a personal matter too. (*To STARODUM.*) We have come, dear sir, to trouble you with our mutual request. (*To her husband and son.*) Bow, both of you!

STARODUM: What is it, madam?

MRS. PROSTAKOV: First of all, please do be seated, everybody! (*All sit down except MITROFAN and YEREMEYEVNA.*) Here is the case, sir. Thanks to the prayers of our parents—as for us sinners, our prayers wouldn't be enough!—the Lord gave us Mitrofanushka. We have done everything to make him what you see him. Won't you take the trouble to examine him and see how much he has learned?

STARODUM: Oh, madam! The rumor has reached my ears that he has only just now completed his studies. I have learned who have been his teachers. I see beforehand what a literary light he must be, having learned from Kuteykin; and what a mathematician, having studied with Cipherkin. (*To PRAVDIN.*) It will be rather curious to hear what the German has taught him.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: All the sciences, my dear sir.

MR. PROSTAKOV: Everything, my lord.

MITROFAN: Anything you please.

PRAVDIN (*to MITROFAN*): What, for instance?

MITROFAN (*hands him a book*): Well, here's the Grammar.

} *Together.*

PRAVDIN (*taking the book*): I see. This is the Grammar. Well, what do you know about it?

MITROFAN: A lot. A noun, and an adjective.

PRAVDIN: A door, for instance: is it a noun or an adjective?

MITROFAN: A door? Which door?

PRAVDIN: Which door! This one.

MITROFAN: That? It's an adjective.

PRAVDIN: Why so?

MITROFAN: Because it is added to something else, to its place. While, over there, the pantry door is still a noun, for it's not been hung for six weeks.

STARODUM: Then for the same reason you will say that the word *fool* is an adjective, because it is applied to a stupid man.

MITROFAN: Of course.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Hey, how is it, my dear sir?

MR. PROSTAKOV: Well, what do you think of him, sir?

PRAVDIN: It couldn't be better. He's strong on grammar.

MILON: I suppose he's just as strong on history.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Well, sir, he has been very fond of all sorts of stories ever since his childhood.

SKOTININ: Mitrofan takes after me. I can't help staring when the deputy tells me his stories. He is a perfect wizard, that son of a bitch! I wonder where they all come from!

MRS. PROSTAKOV: But he's no match for our Adam Adamych.

PRAVDIN (*to MITROFAN*): And how far are you in history?

MITROFAN: How far? What kind of history? In some kinds there are stories how one flies far, far away, into the kingdom at the world's end.

PRAVDIN: Ah! Is that the kind of history Mr. Vralman has been teaching you?

STARODUM: Vralman! That name sounds familiar.

MITROFAN: No. Our Adam Adamych does not tell us histories; he himself is fond of listening to them, just like me.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Both of them make our milkmaid, Havronya, tell them stories.

PRAVDIN: Do you know geography as well?

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*to her son*): Do you hear, my darling? What science is that?

MITROFAN (*whispers to his mother*): How should I know?

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*whispers to MITROFAN*): Don't be stubborn, sweetheart. Now you have to show yourself off.

MITROFAN (*whispers to his mother*): But I don't understand what they are asking me about.

MRS. PROSTAKOV (to PRAVDIN): What did you say that science was, sir?

PRAVDIN: Geography.

MRS. PROSTAKOV (to MITROFAN): Do you hear, eorgraphy!

MITROFAN: What's that? Oh, my Lord! You'll worry my life out of me.

MRS. PROSTAKOV (to PRAVDIN): That's true, too, dear sir. Do me a favor, tell him what that science is and he will answer you then.

PRAVDIN: It's the description of the earth.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: What's the use of it, for instance?

STARODUM: In the first place, it is useful, because when you want to travel somewhere, you know where you are going.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Why, my dear sir! But what are the cab-drivers for? That's their business. . . . This science is not for noblemen. A nobleman just says, "Take me yonder," and they take you wherever you wish. Believe me, my dear sir, that science which Mitrofan does not know is utter nonsense.

STARODUM: Oh, of course, madam. It is a consoling thought for an ignorant man to consider everything that he does not know as sheer nonsense.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Men live and have lived before without any learning. My deceased father was a governor for fifteen years and died illiterate, at his post, and yet he knew how to get a fortune and keep it, too. When petitioners came in he used to sit on his iron trunk. After every visitor went away he used to open his trunk and put away something. He was so economical! He would rather have given up his life than see anything taken out of his trunk. I won't boast before others, and I won't hide it from you: our blessed father passed away—how shall I say it?—he died of hunger, lying on his trunkful of money. Hey! How does that strike you?

STARODUM: Very praiseworthy. One must be a Skotinin to enjoy so blissful a demise!

SKOTININ: That all learning is nonsense was proved beyond dispute by our late uncle Vavila Faleleyevich. Nobody ever heard from him about learning and he didn't care to know about it either. Yet what a head he had!

PRAVDIN: What was he like?

SKOTININ: This is what happened to him. Once when he was riding horseback and was very drunk, he ran into a stone gate. He was a sturdy fellow, the gate was too low, and he forgot to stoop. My, how he knocked his brow against the lintel! My uncle's body was thrown over backwards, and yet his brave steed brought him all the way lying flat on his back from the gate to the doorstep. I'd like to know if

there's a learned head on this earth that wouldn't have been split by such a whack. But uncle, peace be with him, when he sobered up, just asked if the gate wasn't broken.

MILON: You won't deny, Mr. Skotinin, that you are not a learned man yourself; yet in such a case I wager your head wouldn't be much stronger than that of a learned man.

STARODUM (to MILON): Don't bet on it, my friend! I think all the Skotinins are born strong-headed.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: My dear sir! What joy is there in learning? We see right in our county with our own eyes that a clever man will be elected at once to some office by his own fellow nobles.

STARODUM: And if he is clever, he won't refuse to be useful to his own fellow citizens.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: The Lord only knows what you men think about such things nowadays. With us here, it used to be that every one tried his best to retire from service. (To PRAVDIN.) You, sir, though you are more clever than many a man, still you do work hard! Even now, while I was on my way here, I saw somebody bringing a package for you.

PRAVDIN: A package, for me? And nobody told me! (Rising.) Please excuse me for leaving you. Perhaps there are some instructions from the governor.

STARODUM (rises, the rest rise, too): Go, my friend; however, I won't say good-by to you yet.

PRAVDIN: I shall see you again. Are you leaving to-morrow morning?

STARODUM: About seven. (PRAVDIN goes out.)

MILON: And to-morrow, after you are gone, I will take my squadron away, too. I'll go now and give orders.

(MILON goes out, bidding good-by to SOPHIA with his eyes.)

SCENE IX

MRS. PROSTAKOV, MITROFAN, MR. PROSTAKOV, YEREMEYEVNA,
STARODUM, SKOTININ, and SOPHIA

MRS. PROSTAKOV (to STARODUM): Well, sir! You have seen enough of what Mitrofanushka is like.

SKOTININ: Well, my dear friend? You see what I am like, too, don't you?

STARODUM: I know, as intimately as possible, what you are both like.

SKOTININ: Then will Sophie be mine?

STARODUM: No, she will not.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Is Mitrofanushka to marry her?

STARODUM: No.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: What's to prevent it? }
 SKOTININ: Why, what's the matter? } *Together.*

STARODUM (*bringing them together*): To you alone will I tell a secret. She is betrothed. (*He goes out and signs to SOPHIA to follow him.*)

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Oh, you villain!

SKOTININ: He's gone crazy!

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*impatiently*): When are they leaving?

SKOTININ: You heard, didn't you? At seven in the morning.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: At seven o'clock!

SKOTININ: I'll get up at dawn to-morrow. Though he is clever, he won't get rid of a Skotinin so easily! (*Goes out.*)

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*running back and forth on the stage, thinking angrily*): At seven o'clock! We shall get up earlier. . . . I'll have it my own way. . . . Come in here everybody. (*All run to her.*)

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*to her husband*): To-morrow morning at six o'clock the carriage must be ready at the back door. Do you hear? Don't miss it this time!

MR. PROSTAKOV: Certainly, mother dear.

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*to YEREMEYEVNA*): And you, don't you ever dare to snooze, while you are at Sophia's door. Just as soon as she wakes up, run to me.

YEREMEYEVNA: I won't blink, my dear mistress.

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*to her son*): And you, my sweet, get all ready by six o'clock and give orders to the valets not to leave the room. Have three servants stay in the hall near Sophia's bedroom, and two more in the back hall for help.

MITROFAN: Everything shall be done.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Now, God be with you. (*All go out.*) And I know what to do. Wherever there is anger, there is mercy, too. The old man will be mad, but he will have to forgive. But we shall have what is ours.

ACT V

SCENE I

STARODUM and PRAVDIN

PRAVDIN: It was that package which our hostess mentioned yesterday in your presence.

STARODUM: Now you have the means to put an end to the inhumanity of this cruel woman.

PRAVDIN: I am empowered to take the house and the village under my wardship at the first fit of frenzy from which her dependents might suffer.

STARODUM: Thank God that men can find protection now! Take my word for it, my dear friend: whenever the tsar considers matters, whenever he realizes in what his real glory consists, then human beings will recover their rights. Everybody will soon find out that he must look for his own happiness and interest in what is lawful, and that it is unlawful to oppress his fellow men with slavery.

PRAVDIN: I agree with you in this case. But how difficult it is to eradicate the deep-seated prejudices which wicked souls find to their own advantage.

STARODUM: Listen, my friend! A great tsar is a wise tsar. His duty is to show his people what their real welfare is. The glory of his wisdom is to know how to govern men, for one needs no wisdom to rule over graven images. The most stupid peasant in the village is usually chosen to pasture the herd, because it does not require much wit to tend cattle. A tsar who is worthy of his crown, endeavors to elevate the souls of his subjects. This we see with our own eyes.

PRAVDIN: The joy which the tsars derive from ruling over free people must be so great that I do not understand what motives could divert them from it.

STARODUM: Ah, what a truly great soul must the tsar have, to find the path of truth and never swerve from it! There are innumerable traps set to betray a man who has the destiny of his fellow men in his hands. First, a crowd of flattering hypocrites endeavor every instant to convince him that the people are created for his sake, and not he for his people's.

PRAVDIN: One cannot help despising a hypocrite.

STARODUM: Yes, for a hypocrite is a creature who has no good opinion of others, nor of himself. His one desire is, first to blind a man's reason, and then to do with it just what he likes. He is like a thief in the night, who first puts out the candle, and then steals.

PRAVDIN: Of course, the reason for man's unhappiness is his own corruption; but the means to make a man virtuous—

STARODUM: They are in the tsar's hands. As soon as the people see that without virtue nobody will make headway, that neither with base flattery nor at any cost whatever can one buy that by which service is rewarded; that men are chosen for different positions and that positions are not seized by men; then everybody will understand the advantage of being virtuous and everybody will be good.

PRAVDIN: Quite right. A great tsar gives—

STARODUM: Honor and friendship to those whom he likes; and positions and ranks to those who deserve them.

PRAVDIN: At present particular attention is given to education, so that worthy men may not be scarce.

STARODUM: It must be a pledge of the country's welfare. We see right here all the unfortunate results of a poor education. What can such a man as Mitrofanushka do for his country? And yet his ignorant parents are spending money on his ignorant teachers. How many parents among the nobility entrust the moral training of their sons to their peasant-serfs! And fifteen years from now there will be two serfs instead of one: the tutor and the young master.

PRAVDIN: But the upper classes educate their children.

STARODUM: That is all true; but I wish that, with all these sciences, they would not forget the main purpose of all human knowledge, that is—virtue. Take my word for it: education in the hands of a corrupt man is a powerful weapon for the doing of wicked things. Education elevates only a virtuous soul. I wish that while teaching the son of an aristocrat, for instance, the teacher might open a volume of history every day and point out two chapters in it: in one, what great men have done for the welfare of their country; in the other, how an unworthy nobleman, having misused his power and confidence, was degraded from the height of luxury and renown to the abyss of scorn and disgrace.

PRAVDIN: It is indeed necessary that every class of people should have a decent education; then one might be sure— What's this noise?

STARODUM: What has happened?

SCENE II

The same and MILON, SOPHIA and YEREMEYEVNA

MILON (*releases SOPHIA from YEREMEYEVNA, who has taken hold of her, and shouting for his soldiers, unsheathes his sword*): Don't you dare come nearer!

SOPHIA (*rushing to STARODUM*): Oh, uncle dear! Save me!

STARODUM: My darling! What is the matter?

PRAVDIN: What a crime!

SOPHIA: My heart is pounding so!

YEREMEYEVNA: This is the end of me!

} *Together.*

MILON: The villains! On my way here I saw a crowd of people who had taken hold of her! And in spite of her resistance and her cries for help, they were leading her down the steps to a carriage.

SOPHIA: Here is my liberator!

STARODUM: My friend!

PRAVDIN (*to YEREMEYEVNA*): Tell me immediately where they were going to take her, or like the wicked woman that you are—

YEREMEYEVNA: They were going to marry her, my dear sir, to marry her off!

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*behind the scenes*): You rogues! Thieves! Scoundrels! I'll have you all flogged to death!

SCENE III

The same, MR. and MRS. PROSTAKOV, and MITROFAN

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Am I not mistress in my own house? (*Pointing to MILON.*) A stranger is using threats, and my orders are of no account.

MR. PROSTAKOV: Am I to blame?

MITROFAN: Let's give a lesson to the servants. } *Together.*

MRS. PROSTAKOV: I wish I were dead!

PRAVDIN: This assault which I have witnessed gives you the right as her uncle, and you, as her fiancé—

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Fiancé!

MR. PROSTAKOV: What fools we are! } *Together.*

MITROFAN: Go to the devil, all of you!

PRAVDIN: —to demand from the government that this offense to her shall be punished with all the rigor of the law. I shall summon this woman to court at once as a disturber of the peace.

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*falling on her knees*): Gentlemen, I am guilty!

PRAVDIN: Her husband and son could not help participating in the offense.

MR. PROSTAKOV: Guilty through no fault of mine! } *Together, falling*

MITROFAN: Guilty, uncle! } *on their knees.*

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Ah, me—I'm a silly fool! What have I done!

SCENE IV

The same and SKOTININ

SKOTININ: Well, sister, it would be a good joke, if— Bah! What's this? All the family on their knees!

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*still on her knees*): Ah, my lord! A sin confessed is half forgiven. It's my sin! Don't ruin me! (*To SOPHIA.*) My dearest darling, my own, forgive me! Have mercy on me (*pointing to her husband and son*) and on them too, poor orphans!

SKOTININ: Why, sister? Have you gone crazy?

PRAVDIN: Be silent, Skotinin.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: The Lord grant you and your dear fiancé happiness! What do you want my life for?

SOPHIA (to STARODUM): Uncle dear, I'll overlook the offense!

MRS. PROSTAKOV (raising her hands towards STARODUM): Kind sir! You too, forgive me, a sinner! I am only a human being, not an angel.

STARODUM: I know, I know that it is impossible for a man to be an angel. Yet neither must he be a devil.

MILON: Her offense and her repentance are both worthy of contempt.

PRAVDIN (to STARODUM): At the least complaint from you, on just one word from you to the government—no one can save her.

STARODUM: I do not wish to ruin any one. I forgive her.

(All jump up from their kneeling position.)

MRS. PROSTAKOV: You have forgiven! Ah, beloved sir! Well! Now I'll teach those rascally servants of mine. Now I'll take them one by one. I'll find out who let her get away. No, you rogues; no, you thieves! I'll not forgive this disgrace, upon my life!

PRAVDIN: But what do you want to punish your servants for?

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Ah, dear sir, what a question! Am I not the mistress of my own people?

PRAVDIN: And you think you have a right to flog them whenever you take the notion?

SKOTININ: Isn't a nobleman at liberty to beat his servant when he feels like it?

PRAVDIN: When he feels like it? What a desire! You are frank, Skotinin. (To MRS. PROSTAKOV.) No, madam, nobody is at liberty to tyrannize.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Not at liberty! A nobleman can't even flog his servants whenever he likes? What about the privileges given by the Nobility Law?

STARODUM: You are clever at interpreting the ukases.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: You are joking, sir; but I'll give it to them right now, every single one of them. . . . (Tries to go.)

PRAVDIN (stopping her): Wait a minute, madam! (Taking out a paper and speaking to MR. PROSTAKOV in a solemn voice.) In the name of our government I hereby command you to summon all your servants and peasants, in order to announce to them that, because of the cruelty of your wife, connived at by your own utter stupidity, the government empowers me to take under wardship your house and villages.

MR. PROSTAKOV: Ah! What have we come to!

MRS. PROSTAKOV: What! A new disaster! What for? What for, dear sir? That I am mistress in my own house—

PRAVDIN: An inhuman mistress whose wicked temper cannot be tolerated by a well-ordered government. (*To MR. PROSTAKOV.*) Please go.

MR. PROSTAKOV (*goes out, waving his hands*): Who's to blame for this, mother!

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*distressed*): Oh, what a misfortune has come upon us! Oh, how terrible!

SKOTININ (*aside*): Whew! whew! At this rate they'll find *me* out, too. Why, at this rate any Skotinin can get under a wardship. . . I'd better clear out while I'm still safe.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: I've lost everything! I'm done for!

SKOTININ (*to STARODUM*): I was on my way to you to find out something. The favored suitor—

STARODUM (*pointing to MILON*): There he is!

SKOTININ: He is, hey? Then I have no business here. Get the carriage ready and—

PRAVDIN: And then go back to your pigsty. I warn you, too: be careful. I have heard that you treat your pigs much better than your own serfs.

SKOTININ (*stepping aside, cowardly*): My dear sir, how can I have any liking for human beings? Just consider: men and women try to show me how clever they are, but among my pigs I am the cleverest one.

PRAVDIN: Don't forget, however, to warn all the Skotinins of what is threatening them.

SKOTININ: Why not lend a hand to my friends? I'll let them all know that their people should—

PRAVDIN: Be treated with more affection, or at least . . .

SKOTININ: Well?

PRAVDIN: At least not be molested.

SKOTININ (*going out*): At least should not be molested.

SCENE V

MRS. PROSTAKOV, STARODUM, PRAVDIN, MITROFAN, SOPHIA and YEREMEYEVNA

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*to PRAVDIN*): Oh, my dear sir, have mercy on me! What will it profit you? Can't you revoke the ukase somehow? Are all ukases always carried out?

PRAVDIN: I shall never violate the law.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Postpone it for three days, anyhow. (*Aside.*) I'd show them!

PRAVDIN: Not even three hours.

STARODUM: Yes, my friend! Even in three hours she can do so much damage that it'll take a lifetime to straighten it out.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: But how, my dear sir, can you attend to all the petty details?

PRAVDIN: That's my own business. What does not belong to you will be returned to its proper owners, and—

MRS. PROSTAKOV: How about paying off our debts? The teachers haven't had full wages as yet.

PRAVDIN: The teachers? (*To YEREMEYEVNA.*) Are they here? Show them in.

YEREMEYEVNA: They're most likely somewhere near by. What about the German, sir?

PRAVDIN: Call them all in.

(*YEREMEYEVNA goes out.*)

PRAVDIN: Don't worry, madam; I'll satisfy them all.

STARODUM (*seeing that MRS. PROSTAKOV is distressed*): Madam, you will feel much better yourself when you have no power to do harm to others.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: Thank you for such an honor! Of what use am I, if in my own house my hands are tied?

SCENE VI

The same, YEREMEYEVNA, VRALMAN, KUTEYKIN, and CIPHERKIN

YEREMEYEVNA (*showing in the teachers. To PRAVDIN*): Here they are, dear sir, all our rascals.

VRALMAN: Your Honor? Dit you ask for me?

KUTEYKIN (*to PRAVDIN*): They called unto me, and I came.

CIPHERKIN: What is your command, your Honor?

STARODUM (*at the sight of VRALMAN, looking steadily at him*): Why, so it's you, Vralman!

VRALMAN (*recognizing STARODUM*): Ay, ay, ay, ay! It eez you, my dear master. (*Kissing the skirt of STARODUM's kaftan.*) Are you feeling vell, my lort?

PRAVDIN: What? Do you know him?

STARODUM: Of course I know him. For three years he was my coachman.

(*All are surprised.*)

PRAVDIN: A marvelous teacher!

STARODUM: And so you are a teacher here, Vralman! I really thought that you were an honest man and would not attempt anything that you weren't fitted for.

VRALMAN: Vat can one do, my dear master! I am not the first, I am not the last one! I vandered for tree monts in Moscow vidout a jop; nobody vants a coachman! I had eezer to die of hunger, or be a teacher.

PRAVDIN (*to the teachers*): In the name of the government I have become the guardian of this house and I hereby dismiss you.

CIPHERKIN: Nothing could be better.

KUTEYKIN: You dismiss us, your Honor! But we must settle our accounts first.

PRAVDIN: What is it you want?

KUTEYKIN: No, my dear sir, my bill is not exceeding short. They owe me for a half-year's tuition, for the shoes which I have worn out in these three years, for my rent, and then again I often made trips here for nothing, and—

MRS. PROSTAKOV: You greedy soul! Kuteykin! What is this for?

PRAVDIN: Don't interfere, madam, please.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: If the truth of the matter be told, what did you teach Mitrofanushka?

KUTEYKIN: That's his business, not mine.

PRAVDIN (*to KUTEYKIN*): All right, all right. (*To CIPHERKIN.*) How much do you receive?

CIPHERKIN: Me? Nothing.

MRS. PROSTAKOV: My dear sir, he got ten rubles one year, but he hasn't got a kopek yet for the last year.

CIPHERKIN: Well then: let those ten rubles cover the shoes I have worn out in two years. We are even now.

PRAVDIN: And for the tuition?

CIPHERKIN: Nothing.

STARODUM: Why nothing?

CIPHERKIN: I won't charge anything. He didn't learn anything from me.

STARODUM: Just the same—you must be paid.

CIPHERKIN: No reason for it. I served my tsar for over twenty years. I took money for that service; but for doing nothing I have never received pay, and I won't take any now.

STARODUM: Here's an honest man indeed! (*STARODUM and MILON take money from their purses.*)

PRAVDIN: Aren't you ashamed, Kuteykin?

KUTEYKIN (*bowing his head*): Shame on me, a sinner!

STARODUM (*to CIPHERKIN*): This is for you, friend, for your good heart.

CIPHERKIN: Thank you, your Honor! I am grateful! You may give me a present, if you like. I shall never in my life demand any reward without deserving it.

MILON (*handing him money*): Here is some more for you, my man!

CIPHERKIN: Thank you, too.

(PRAVDIN *also gives him money.*)

CIPHERKIN: But what for, your Honor? Such favors!

PRAVDIN: It's because you are not like Kuteykin.

CIPHERKIN: Why, your Honor! I am a soldier!

PRAVDIN (*to CIPHERKIN*): Well, now go; the Lord be with you!

(CIPHERKIN *goes out.*)

PRAVDIN: And you, Kuteykin, will you come here to-morrow and settle your bill with the mistress herself?

KUTEYKIN (*running away*): With herself! I renounce everything!

VRALMAN (*to STARODUM*): Don't desert your old servant, your Honor! Tak me *mit* you!

STARODUM: But, Vralman, I imagine you have lost your skill with horses.

VRALMAN: Ach no, dear master! Leeving with my masters here has always seemed to me like leeving among ze horses in ze stable.

SCENE VII

The same and VALET

VALET (*to STARODUM*): Your carriage is ready.

VRALMAN: May I drive it?

STARODUM: Go, take a seat on the coach box.

(VRALMAN *goes out.*)

SCENE VIII

MRS. PROSTAKOV, STARODUM, MILON, SOPHIA, PRAVDIN, MITROFAN, YEREMEYEVNA

STARODUM (*to PRAVDIN, holding the hands of SOPHIA and MILON*): Well, my friend! We are leaving. Wish us . . .

PRAVDIN: I wish you happiness, which is the right of every honest heart.

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*rushing to embrace her son*): You alone are left to me in all this world, my darling Mitrofanushka!

MITROFAN: Oh, don't bother me, mother, what a pest!

MRS. PROSTAKOV: So, you too! You too have forsaken me! Ah, how ungrateful! (*She faints.*)

SOPHIA (*running toward her*): Oh, Lord! She is unconscious.

STARODUM (*to SOPHIA*): Help her, help her!

(*SOPHIA and YEREMEYEVNA attend to MRS. PROSTAKOV.*)

PRAVDIN (*to MITROFAN*): You scamp! How can you be so rude to your mother? Her blind love for you is mainly responsible for her misfortunes.

MITROFAN: I don't know, she acted as if she—

PRAVDIN: You ruffian!

STARODUM (*to YEREMEYEVNA*): How is she now? How?

YEREMEYEVNA (*looking intently at MRS. PROSTAKOV and clasping her hands*): She is coming to, dear sir; she is coming to.

PRAVDIN (*to MITROFAN*): And as for you, I know what to do with you, my fellow. Get into the government service!

MITROFAN (*waving his hand*): As for me, as they direct!

MRS. PROSTAKOV (*coming to, in despair*): I am done for! I have lost my power! I won't dare show myself anywhere for shame! I have no son!

STARODUM (*pointing to MRS. PROSTAKOV*): Behold the just reward of wickedness!

WIT WORKS WOE

A Comedy in Four Acts

By ALEXANDER SERGEYEVICH GRIBOYEDOV

(1823)

Translated by Sir Bernard Pares

Fate, the wanton and the trickster,
Has contrived a curious mixture:
Fools are happy, don't you know;
For the clever, Wit Works Woe.

CHARACTERS *

PÁVEL AFANÁSYEVICH FÁMUSOV, *head of a government office*

SÓPHYA PÁVLOVNA, *his daughter*

LIZA, *her lady's maid*

ALEXÉY STEPÁNOVICH MOLCHÁLIN, *secretary to FAMUSOV, living in his house*

ALEXANDER ANDRÉYEVICH CHÁTSKY

COLONEL SERGÉY SERGÉYEVICH SKALozÚB

NATÁLYA DMÍTRIYEVNA GORICHÉV, *a young married lady*

PLATÓN MIKHÁYLOVICH GORICHÉV, *her husband*

PRINCE TUGOÚKHOVSKY, *his wife, and their six daughters*

COUNTESSES HRYÚMIN, *grandmother and granddaughter*

ANTÓN ANTÓNOVICH ZAGORÉTSKY

HLESTÓVA, *an old lady, sister-in-law of FAMUSOV*

REPETÍLOV

MR. N.

MR. D.

PETRÚSHKA, *servant to FAMUSOV*

FOOTMEN OF FAMUSOV

THE PORTER

A crowd of guests of all sorts and their footmen

The scene is in Moscow, in FAMUSOV's house.

* English equivalents of the Russian names are as follows: Sir Paul Loftus, Miss Sophy Loftus, Mr. Still, Alexander Dashwood, Colonel Trouncer, Nataly Redtail, Captain Joe Redtail, Prince Drumhollow, Countess Cantancre, Mr. Lighter, Old Miss Lasham, Mr. Crawley, Peter.

In the dialogue the shorter patronymics are used: Sergéich, Dmítrevna, Mikháylych. Goríchev and Tugoukhovsky are pronounced, Go-ri-choff', Tu-go-u'-khoff-sky.

WIT WORKS WOE

ACT I

SCENE I

A drawing-room; a large clock. At the right, a door leads to SOPHYA'S room, from which are heard a piano and a flute; later they become silent. LIZA asleep in the middle of the room, half hanging out of an armchair.

It is early morning; day is just breaking.

LIZA (*suddenly wakes, gets up and looks round*):

It's dawning! There! How fast the hours go skipping!

I begged for bed; "Oh no!" they said,

"We've asked a friend: you'll watch instead;

Don't dare to take a nap till off your chair you're slipping!"

Just now they might have caught me tripping.

It's day! I'll tell them.

(*Knocks at SOPHYA'S door.*)

Please, there! Miss!

Dear, dear! We'll have to pay for this!

Your party's lasted on till day.

You're deaf then? Mr. Alexey!

Miss Sophy! Even fear can't make them move.

(*Leaves the door.*)

Perhaps we'll have papa

An unexpected guest, ha ha!

I like my work when missus is in love!

Come! Time to part. It's morning, sir!

SOPHYA: What time is it?

LIZA: The house is all astir.

SOPHYA (*inside*): What time is it?

LIZA: It's seven, it's eight, it's nine.

SOPHYA (*inside*): That isn't true.

LIZA (*leaves the door*): Oh, love is fine!

They will not hear a word one utters.

Suppose I go and draw the shutters!

I'll just turn on the clock, it's got a fine alarm;
Let's make it strike the hour.

(Climbs on a chair and moves the hand round. The clock strikes and plays a tune.)

(FAMUSOV comes in.)

SCENE II

LIZA and FAMUSOV

LIZA: Oh! Master!

FAMUSOV: Master, yes!

(Stops the striking.)

It's you, you naughty girl, you harum-scarum!
What all the row's about, I simply couldn't guess!
Why that's a flute, thought I; the grand piano, surely:
For Sophy that's a trifle early.

LIZA: Oh no, sir! I—by some mistake—

FAMUSOV: So that's it? By mistake? You keep more wide-awake!
But I know what you meant—

(Squeezes up and makes up to her.)

You humbug! You disgrace!

LIZA: Humbug yourself sir! Do such faces suit your face?

FAMUSOV: H'm! Bashful! Yet there's naught, you'll find,
But tricks and whimsies in her mind.

LIZA: Leave off! It's you're behaving queerly!
Remember, sir, you're growing old!

FAMUSOV: Well, nearly.

LIZA: If some one comes and finds us here!

FAMUSOV: And who should come, my dear?

Why, she's asleep. *(Pointing.)*

LIZA: She's just now gone to bed.

FAMUSOV: Just now? And what all night?

LIZA: Sat up and read.

FAMUSOV: So, that's her latest taste; it seems it's hard to quench.

LIZA: Oh yes, she locks her door and reads aloud in French.

FAMUSOV: Just say that's nonsense, if her eyes she wants to keep;

There's not much sense in all this poring,
French books won't let your mistress sleep,
And Russian books soon set me snoring.

LIZA: Yes, when she's up, I'll say, sir.

I'm sure you'll wake her up! Oh, please do go away, sir.

FAMUSOV: Wake up? 'Twas you that set the clock awhirl,
You've routed out the neighbors with your playing.

LIZA (*at the top of her voice*): Here drop it, sir!

FAMUSOV (*stops her mouth*): Don't scream so loud, my girl;
Your wits are straying!

LIZA: But I'm afraid that soon, as sure as not—

FAMUSOV: What?

LIZA: It's time, sir, that you knew you're not a baby:

Young ladies' sleep is light as may be;
Just creak the door, or breathe a word—
They wake immediately.

FAMUSOV: How absurd!

SOPHYA (*inside*): Here. Liza!

FAMUSOV: Sh! (*Creeps out on tiptoe.*)

LIZA (*alone*): He's gone! Oh, save us from
our masters!

With them you're on the watch with every step you move.

God help you! Worse than all disasters

Your master's anger or your master's love.

SCENE III

LIZA; SOPHYA, *with a candle, followed by* MOLCHALIN

SOPHYA: What, Liza? How you made me start!

You're making such a noise.

LIZA: I know you hate to part;

You think that's not enough, locked in alone all night.

SOPHYA: What's this? Broad daylight! Yes, you're right.

(*Puts out the light.*)

Broad day? How sad! How quick the nights are gone!

LIZA: You're gloomy, miss.— For me—I can't go on!

Just now your pa came in, it nearly struck me dead!

I did the best I could, I don't know what I said—

(*To MOLCHALIN.*) Well, are you turned to wood? Sir, please to make
your bow!

Be off: no time for courting now.

Look up, and see the clock! Glance out there, down below,

The streets are full of people long ago,

They're moving in the house; the mops and brooms are plying.

SOPHYA: Who notes, in happiness, how time is flying?

LIZA: Then don't take note, that's your affair!

But I'm supposed to watch; it's I the blame shall bear.

SOPHYA (*to MOLCHALIN*): Well, go! Again we part, to bore our-
selves all day.

LIZA: Lord help you! Take that hand away!
(Parts them. In the doorway MOLCHALIN runs into FAMUSOV.)

SCENE IV

LIZA, SOPHYA, MOLCHALIN, FAMUSOV

FAMUSOV: What a coincidence! Molchalín, you, man?

MOLCHALIN:

I, 'sir.

FAMUSOV: What brought you here? An early riser?
 And Sophy! Morning, girl! Your bed, why aren't you in it?
 You too, an early bird! I'd like to know the reason,
 And why God made you meet so very out of season?

SOPHYA: He's only just come in this minute.

MOLCHALIN: Straight from my walk.

FAMUSOV:

My friend, now can't you for

your outing

A little further round go scouting?

And you, miss, straight from bed, and off you start your dances
 With some young man in tow! Respectable it looks!

All night you read absurd romances,

And here's the fruit of all these books.

'Tis all Kuznetsky Bridge,* and those infernal Frenchmen,
 Who send their authors, bards and fashions to their henchmen;

They wreck our brains, they wreck our purses.

Creator, save us from these curses,

Their hat shops, bonnet shops, their hair-pin, eye-and-hook shops,

Their cook-shops and their book-shops!

SOPHYA: Excuse me, please, papa! You make my head go round;
 You scared me quite. Even now my breath I've hardly found.

You chose to rush in here, so gruff and grumbly;

You've made me quite confused.

FAMUSOV:

I thank you humbly.

I put you out! All right!

Ran in so quick, and gave a fright?

No, miss! I'm out of sorts myself; I get no rest.

All day I rush about as if I were possessed,

My office work, it never lets me be;

First this one comes, then that, and all are after me!

But say, did I expect these worries, this deception?

SOPHYA: From whom, papa?

* Kuznetsky Bridge was and is the principal and most fashionable street in Moscow for shopping.

FAMUSOV:

A strange enough conception!

I love to scold without a reason!

Stop crying! Hear a word in season!

Your infant mind I fed with ladle,

I watched your training from the cradle:

Your mother died—I managed, for your mother,

In Madam Roche to find another.

I set to guide your steps that excellent old creature,

Wise head, rare character and kindly nature;

The only thing I have against her:

For fifty extra pounds, poor spinster,

She skipped away at some one's mean suggestion.

But madam's not the question;

Before your eyes for model you have ample;

You've got your own papa's example.

Now just you look at me! Perhaps I'm not athletic—

Gray-haired, but full of life, by no means on the shelf:

Free—widower, but master of myself,

Known everywhere for conduct most ascetic—

LIZA: By leave, sir—

FAMUSOV:

Hold your tongue, I say!

What dreadful times! One can't move any way!

We're all precocious, all too clever,

Our daughters worst of all—the simplest folk, I never!

These languages, how fell their power!

These tutor-tramps we hire on board, or by the hour!

Say, is there anything we do not teach our daughters?

To song and dance, to sighs and fondling, school their lives,

As if we're training them for strolling actors' wives!

(To MOLCHALIN.) And you, kind visitor, what brings you to these quarters?

I took the homeless boy; I fostered him with care;

I chose you for my clerk and got you made assessor;

When you were moved to town, 'twas I was intercessor:

Yes, but for me you'd still have stuck in Tver.

SOPHYA: I really can't make out the cause of all this pother.

He's living in the house. A wonderful event!

He comes into a room and chances on another.

FAMUSOV: By chance,—or chanced because he meant?

And why the two of you—a chance that in you walked!

SOPHYA: That's what the chance consists of, clearly.

You shouted just outside! You frightened me severely;

So off I started running at the double!

FAMUSOV: Then all this how-dy-do she lays on me, it seems!
Most inconvenient, my voice should give such trouble.

SOPHYA: A trifle troubles after troubled dreams.
Tell you my dream? And then you'll see it quite.

FAMUSOV: What is this all about?

SOPHYA: You'd like to hear?

FAMUSOV:

All right!

SOPHYA: Well! Do you see, in dreamland yonder

All round a flowery mead I wander,

To find

Some herb—I don't remember of what kind,
When suddenly a friend—the kind we sometimes see,

A friend you feel you've known forever,
Was walking by my side, so quiet and so clever,
But why!—You know a man who's poor as poor can be—

FAMUSOV: Oh, daughter, spare the blow and say no more!
No match for you, if once he's poor.

SOPHYA: Then sky and meadows, all is swept beyond our range:
In darkened room we sit. To make the whole more strange,

The floor is gaping; out come you,
Your hair on end, your face of deathly hue.

The doors all slam and fly ajar;
Strange things come in—half man, half beast they are;
They part us, they torment the friend that sat beside me;
It seems the dearest thing I had is missing;
I strain across to him—you seize him and deride me;
All round the monsters glower—groans, laughter, roars and hissing;
He's dragged off shrieking;

I wake, and there was some one speaking;
Your voice it was! What's that, thought I, so early?
So in I ran—and here were you and he.

FAMUSOV: A silly dream it seems to me.

If that's all right, there's nothing missing surely,
There's devils and there's love, there's horrors and there's flowers;
(To MOLCHALIN.)

But you, sir, by the powers—

MOLCHALIN: I heard your voice—

FAMUSOV:

I like that greatly!

It's all my voice, they say: please note how accurately
They all catch up the sound and from their couches fly;
My voice that brought you here! But why, yes, tell me why?

MOLCHALIN: With papers, sir!

FAMUSOV: There aren't enough, you find?

I'd so much like to know why all this hurry

For documents of every kind! (*Gets up.*)

Now, Sophy dear, I'll spare you further worry;

Queer dreams there often are and wakings still more queer.

You went to find a herb; instead,

You stumbled on a cavalier!

Put all that nonsense from your head:

They're silly things, these signs and wonders:

Be off to bed, to sleep some more. (To MOLCHALIN.)

And now our papers we'll explore.

MOLCHALIN: I brought them to report some blunders;

They can't go out without correction: some, I see,

Are contradictory, and much beside the point.

FAMUSOV: There's one thing puts my nose all out of joint.—

See that they don't pile up! That's good enough for me;

If you'd your way, you'd keep the lot;

For me, beside the point or not,

I treat them all one way:

Once signed, why let them go, I say!

(Goes out, allowing MOLCHALIN to precede him.)

SCENE V

SOPHYA and LIZA

LIZA: Well, come! You're lucky, miss; what fun to think he's gone!

But no! We'll do the laughing later on:

The prospect's black; I've not a tooth but chatters;

It's not the doing wrong: it's what they say, that matters.

SOPHYA: Let blame who likes! It's not from that I'm shrinking:

It's what papa will do, that sets me thinking.

Rough, ruthless, quick to take amiss

He always was: but after this—

Well, you yourself can judge—

LIZA: I judge by what I know!

If you're locked up, perhaps he'll let me be;

More likely—Lord-a-mercy me!—

Molchalin and myself—we all shall have to go.

SOPHYA: But only think how fortune is capricious!

When things look black it turns to gladness ;

And then when nobody can have one thought of sadness—

Such charming music too—that time was so delicious,

It seemed that fate itself protected,
 With naught to worry till the morning—
 And trouble comes, when least expected!

LIZA: Well, that's just it, miss! you despised my stupid warning,
 Thought my advice beneath you, far,
 And there you are!

What need to seek a better prophet?
 I always said: this love, there's nothing will come of it.
 No, not for generations.

Like all you Moscow folk, your father's this at bottom:
 He'd like a son-in-law with titles, decorations;
 And decorations—well, not every one has got 'em.

And then, of course, a pot of money,
 Enough to cut a dash, give dances—that's his notion:

For instance, Colonel Skalozub, my honey—
 A balance at the bank, and certain of promotion.

SOPHYA: How wondrous nice! A prospect full of mirth!
 What talk of troops and drill! The Lord deliver!

There's not a word of sense he's uttered since his birth.
 What! Marry him? I'd jump into the river.

LIZA: Well yes, miss! He's absurd, and how he drones away!
 But be it soldier or civilian,

For feeling, liveliness and humor—in a million
 It's Mr. Chatsky any day.

I'd never wish to give you pain;
 That's gone, and can't return again;
 But I remember—

SOPHYA: What? Yes, he's the one
 The foibles of your friends to chaff with.

He talks and jokes. I find that's fun;
 There's no one that one cannot laugh with!

LIZA: And nothing else, you think? I've known him broken-hearted.
 Poor fellow! I can see the moment when you parted.

"You crying, sir!" said I. "Come! Live and die in laughter."

"Ah, Liza, but I well may weep," said he;

"For who can say for sure what I shall find hereafter,
 How much, perhaps, is lost to me?"

As if he knew, poor soul, that ere three years were gone—

SOPHYA: Be careful! Don't forget, I won't be put upon!
 Perhaps I have behaved with neither rhyme nor reason,
 I know! I please myself! But tell me, where's the treason?
 I never proved untrue; say who'll make that reproof?
 Yes! He and I, I know, grew up beneath one roof.

Time was, the two of us were not apart all day,
 And ties of youthful friendship come that way.
 He left: our company had doubtless come to pall—
 He hardly ever came to call.

Then in he rushed again—this time as lover,
 With no attempt his moods to cover.

He's clever, sharp, and talks no end:

It seems that every one's his friend.

Well then, he thought, a genius he would prove!

The man could not sit still, was always on the roam;

Oh, if you're really deep in love,

Why try to be so smart? Why go so far from home?

LIZA: Where is he now? In what far quarters?

They say he takes a cure and drinks the bitter waters;

I shouldn't think he's ill: more likely just worn out.

SOPHYA: And no doubt happiest with freakish folks about.

The man I like is much more nice,

Molchalin never fails himself to sacrifice.

No liberties! All through so timid and uncertain;

With one like him, so quick the night-time goes!

We sit and sit; long since, it's dawn outside the curtain;

And what d'you think we're doing?

LIZA: Goodness knows!

SOPHYA: Well, first of all my hand he'll take,

Then sigh as if his heart would break,

With ne'er a word too much; and so all night he stays,

His hand in mine, and there he'll gaze and gaze.

You're laughing! Why, what for? I'd like to know the reason;

Your loud guffaws seem scarce in season.

LIZA: No, miss! I can't forget your good old auntie's worry,

When that young French mossos had left her in a hurry.

Poor dear old lady, she was in despair;

She tried in vain to hide her woe:

She quite forgot to dye her hair,

And in three days 'twas white as snow.

(Continues to laugh loudly.)

SOPHYA *(offended)*: And so, you seem to think, they'll speak of me
 hereafter!

LIZA: Oh, miss, you're angry with my silly laughter!

Oh no, indeed, miss! Not at all, miss!

I laughed, to cheer you with some mad conceit.

(Servant comes in, followed by CHATSKY.)

SCENE VI

SOPHYA, LIZA, SERVANT, CHATSKY

SERVANT: It's Mr. Chatsky come to call, miss! (*Goes out.*)

SCENE VII

SOPHYA, LIZA, CHATSKY

CHATSKY: So early—yet afoot, and I am at your feet.

(*Ardently kisses her hand.*)

Well! Mayn't I have a kiss? I'm not expected? Speak!

You're glad? Not glad? Now look me in the eyes!

Surprised? No more? For me it's a surprise!

As if I'd only left last week,

Or, *tête-à-tête* all yesterday,

We'd bored each other till we'd naught to say!

No faintest trace of love! You're wonderfully pretty;

But memory, feeling, no—the more's the pity!

For five and forty hours I never blinked an eye,

And hurricane and storm, seven hundred versts went by—

With all my senses numbed, thrown out not once or twice—

And well repaid when I get home!

SOPHYA: Oh, Chatsky, but I'm glad you've come!

CHATSKY: You're glad? That's very nice:

But gladness such as yours not easily one tells.

It rather seems to me, all told,

That making man and horse catch cold,

I've pleased myself and no one else!

LIZA: There, sir: and if you'd stood on this same landing here

Five minutes, no, not five ago,

You'd heard your name as clear as clear.

You say, miss! Tell him it was so.

SOPHYA: And always so—no less, no more.

No, as to that, I'm sure you can't reproach me;

Each passer, people at the door,

Each traveler from abroad, each stranger who'd approach me,

A sailor even I'd ask, you know,

Oh, had he never chanced to pass you in your cart?

CHATSKY: Well, let's suppose it's so!

Thrice blessed who believes; believing warms the heart.

Good God! To think I'm back again with you,

In Moscow! How your face has altered too!

That age of innocence! Well I remember
 How some long evening in November,
 We'd come and disappear, go skipping here and there,
 And play, and push about a table or a chair.
 In front your father sat, with Madam at piquet.
 That corner that we liked; there, if I don't forget—
 If door or table creaked, we'd start and look away.

SOPHYA: How childish!

CHATSKY: Yes, miss, and to-day

You're seventeen, as pretty as they grow—
 Incomparable—yes, and that, of course, you know.
 That's why you look abashed and keep a downcast eye.
 Well, have you got in love? I want a quick reply.

No thinking! Now! Don't get confused!

SOPHYA: And say who wouldn't be?

Your questions come so quick! You look so hard at me!

CHATSKY: What's more worth looking at? I think it is excused!

Now tell me, what can Moscow show me new?

A ball last night, to-morrow there'll be two;

One's had good luck, another's met reverses,

The same old talk! The same old album verses!

SOPHYA: You run down Moscow? Why of travel make such fuss?

Where better?

CHATSKY: Where there's none of us.

Well, how's your father now? And does he still keep faith,

And love his English club till death?

Your Uncle Tom, has he gone off the hooks?

And then that what's-his-name? A Turk or Greek by looks,

The dark-complexioned chap with spindle legs like stalks:

I can't remember— What d'you call;

In drawing-room, in dining-hall,

You can't go in but there he walks.

And then those boulevard Graces three,

They've grown more juvenile for generations;

They've tons of kith and kin! With sisters' help, you'll see,

They'll have all Europe for relations.

And then our sunshine, our delight:

You read upon his brow "Free Ticket" and "First Night";

His house was like a grove, all painted green;

Himself was fat, his actors lean.

Remember at the ball, that night we found together,

In one of his back rooms behind a kind of veil

They'd stowed away a man who trilled like nightingale,

A winter bard of summer weather.

And that consumptive man, your kinsman, learning's foe—
The Education Board was where he got his berth—

Who claimed an oath from high and low
To hide the alphabet from every soul on earth.
Once more it is my fate to meet the whole dull train;
They'll bore me quite to death. Yet who in all is comely?
And when from years abroad you've just got back again,
Even your country's smoke, how sweet it is, how homely!

SOPHYA: I ought to send you to Aunt Patience
To make a list of our relations.

CHATSKY: And auntie's still a spinster, still Minerva?
Still Catherine the Great's devoted server?
With pupils and with pugs house full to suffocation?
Oh, yes, we must talk education.

It seems that as we used to do,
We all take pains to raise whole regiments of teachers—
I've rather more than you, I got them cheaper too;

It can't be said they're very learned creatures
For here, on pain of Heaven's own choler,
They make us write each booby down
As every one a first-class scholar.

Our mentor—can you see his nightcap, dressing gown?
All signs of learning deep, the fingers stained with ink—
Oh, how our childish minds turned shy with trepidation!

How from our earliest times we learned to think,
Without the Germans no salvation!
And Monsieur Guillaumot, that lively Frenchman too,
He isn't married yet?

SOPHYA: To who?

CHATSKY: to some princess he might be plighted;
Pulcheria Andrevna for example.

SOPHYA: A dancing-master? He?

CHATSKY: Why not? He has been knighted.

Of us, it's true, you'd ask both rank and fortune ample.

But Guillaumot—why that's the style to-day:
At all big gatherings, at feasts of parish bodies
There's still the strife of tongues, in quite the Bible way,
There's French and Nizhny Novgorodish!

SOPHYA: A strife of tongues?

CHATSKY: Yes, two! No less success ensues.

LIZA: 'Twould not be easy, sir, to find a match for yours.

CHATSKY: At any rate, no nonsense in it.
That's news! I just enjoy a happy minute—

It's seeing you has fired my mind—

I talk and talk! At times you'd hardly find
Molchalin's self more dull. Where is he, by the way?
And hasn't he by now found anything to say?
Time was, if some one showed some verses weak and sloppy,
He'd read them through and ask, Oh, mayn't he make a copy?
But as for that, he'll rise! He'll make his way, the rogue!

Men who say nothing are in vogue.

SOPHYA (*aside*): It's not a man! A snake!

(*Aloud and constrained.*)

I'd like to ask you so—

Now have you for a joke or in distress of mind
Said somehow, by mistake, of some one something kind,
Not now, but in your childhood, don't you know?

CHATSKY: That naïve, that tender time! The thought had half un-
nerved me;

Oh, why so far away? And now, 'tis well you've served me!

The jingling bells ring out harmonious,

And rushing headlong o'er the waste of snow,

By day, by night, to her I go!

And she receives me, how? So stern and ceremonious.

A full half-hour I suffer from your coldness—

The face of virgin sunk in prayer;

And yet, believe me, dear, I love you to despair.

(*A moment's silence.*)

But tell me, are the jests I chatter in my boldness

So bitter that they leave a smart?

If so, my mind's at variance with my heart.

If some queer dog does some queer trick,

I laugh, but I forget it quick;

But bid me plunge through fire, I'll never stop to doubt.

SOPHYA: Well, plunge then! But supposing you come out—

(*FAMUSOV comes in.*)

SCENE VIII

SOPHYA, LIZA, CHATSKY, FAMUSOV

FAMUSOV: Another too!

SOPHYA: Papa, the dream's come true!

FAMUSOV (*half aloud*): Oh, damn that dream!

(*SOPHYA goes out. CHATSKY gazes at the door by which she has left.*)

SCENE IX

FAMUSOV and CHATSKY

FAMUSOV: Well, come! That's just like you.

Two lines in three whole years he writes,

Then down from out the clouds he lights! (*They embrace.*)

How are you, friend? My boy, I hope you're well.

I'm certain you can tell us if you choose

A budget of important news;

Sit down! Say all there is to tell! (*They sit down.*)CHATSKY (*absently*): But Sophy Pavlovna, how pretty she has grown!

FAMUSOV: Oh, you young folks, I know, have nothing else to do; You think of pretty girls and that alone.

She made some chance remark, and you

Are carried off your head! All sorts of hopes allure you.

CHATSKY: Oh no! I'm not much spoilt by hopes, I can assure you.

FAMUSOV: "The dream's come true," the words I caught as she went out.—

It's you that thought you'd—?

CHATSKY: I? Oh, never!

FAMUSOV: Then what? Who did she dream about?

CHATSKY: I don't interpret dreams.

FAMUSOV: It's rubbish, don't believe her!

CHATSKY: But I can say my eyesight's true:

I never saw—I tell you, sir,

A living creature could compare with her!

FAMUSOV: That's all he'll say! Where all these years were you?

Come, all your wanderings unravel!

Where are you sprung from now?

CHATSKY: I've got no time to start;

All round the world I meant to travel,

And never did the hundredth part. (*Gets up quickly.*)

Excuse my looking in! I thought I'd stop, you know!

I've not been home. Good-by! Within an hour or so

I'll come: I won't leave out one fact of interest;

I'll tell you first, and you shall retail to the rest.

(*At the door.*) How pretty! (*He goes out.*)

SCENE X

FAMUSOV, *alone*

FAMUSOV: There now! Which does she prefer?
"Papa, the dream's come true!"
We have it straight out loud from her!
Well, well! I'm wrong. What sent me so askew?
Molchalin seemed just now more liked than I desire;
And now from frying-pan to fire!
A pauper—and a dissipator,
As smart a scapegrace as there are;
Oh, what a heavy charge, Creator,
To be a grown-up girl's papa!

ACT II

SCENE I

FAMUSOV and PETRUSHKA

FAMUSOV: Petrushka, boy, you love surprises dearly,
This time your elbow's torn. That calendar get down!
Read! Not like parish clerk, you clown,
But feelingly, with sense and clearly.
Just wait! Get out your book! Put down my daily tasks.
We'll write the week's engagements out.
Praskovya Fedorovna asks
On Tuesday to a dish of trout.
There, what a world! It beats me quite!
One's mind can't grapple with the question:
You diet, then you stuff all night!
Three hours to dine and three days for digestion!
Put down—same day—no, that's not right—
The funeral, thirteenth of December.
Oh, human race! We don't remember
That each of us must crawl in there—
To that small box, so tight and square—
But some have set themselves to leave a reputation,
And do so: here's an illustration!
Deceased was a respected Kammerherr; *
He got his key; he left it to his heir;

* The Kammerherr was the Groom of the Bedchamber, a rank which was fairly liberally distributed among the upper aristocracy; the key was the badge of office.

Well off himself, an heiress off he carried;
 His children, grandchildren he married;
 And when the good man died, there's none but piped an eye:
 Cosmo Petrovich—rest his ashes!
 What first-rate men, I say, in Moscow live and die!
 Write down for Thursday too—with two small dashes—
 Or Friday possibly, or Saturday it may be,
 The doctor's wife—put down—for christening the baby;
 As yet she's not produced the baby. Still,
 I've got my own idea she will.
 (CHATSKY comes in.)

SCENE II

FAMUSOV, CHATSKY, PETRUSHKA

FAMUSOV: Who's that? What, Chatsky? Come in, pray!
 Sit down, my boy.
 CHATSKY: You're busy?
 FAMUSOV (to PETRUSHKA): You can go.
 (PETRUSHKA goes out.)
 Why, yes! I'm getting down my entries for each day;
 So easy to forget, you know!
 CHATSKY: You don't feel very bright, I see,
 Why is it? Is my own arrival not in season?
 Or Sophya Pavlovna, may be,
 Is she upset for any reason?
 Your face, your movements, show you're ill at ease.
 FAMUSOV: I've found a puzzle, boy; it floors
 My wits. As old as I am, please,
 To squat and dance upon all fours!
 CHATSKY: Well! No one asks you to, nor will;
 I only spoke, unless I'm wrong,
 Of Sophya Pavlovna: I thought she might be ill.
 FAMUSOV: Five thousand times, O Lord, the same old song
 He sings for all it's worth!—
 Now Sophya Pavlovna's the prettiest thing on earth.
 Now Sophya Pavlovna's not well!
 Say, do you fancy her? You've had a spell
 All round the world; perhaps you'd like to marry?
 CHATSKY: Why ask?
 FAMUSOV: You might ask me: I think that's ordinary.
 You see, I'm rather close related—

Her father, so I've heard it stated:

That counts a bit, I understand.

CHATSKY: Well, tell me what you'd say, were I to ask her hand.

FAMUSOV: Well, first, don't play the fool—that's what I'd say,
Look after your affairs: you leave them rusting.

But chief of all—take service straight away.

CHATSKY: The service? Good! Servility? Disgusting!

FAMUSOV: Ah! There you are! You're all too proud.

Ask what your fathers did, you pushing crowd!

You'd profit by your elders' story;

Take me, or Uncle Maxim, now in glory.

My uncle ate on gold: no silver he'd employ;

A hundred servants stood to do his least command;

All stars; * an escort with his four-in-hand;

Always at court, and what a court, my boy!

Not that you see to-day—

The Empress Catherine—he knew no meaner sway.

Then each one weighed a ton, the largest make;

Each time they bowed, the pigtail mustn't shake.

Court favorites were still more fine;

They wouldn't eat or drink your way or mine.

But uncle!—where's your prince or count?—

With serious mien, commanding front;

But times when you must show you're zealous,

He'd bend half double, like his fellows.

Well, one Reception Day, he somehow chanced to stumble

And nearly broke his neck—so heavy did he tumble;

The old man groaned—a yelp most ghastly!

The high imperial smile made clear, it pleased her vastly;

She deigned to laugh, and Uncle Maxim, how?

He scrambled up, stood straight, he tried to make his bow,

And fell again: this time he meant to!

They roared with laughter, and a third time down he went, too.

Well! What d'you think of that? Now, we should call him clever:

He fell down badly, got up sound!

And after, who to whist was asked much more than ever?

Who always at the court a kindly welcome found?

Maxim Petrovich! Who from all gets great attention?

Maxim Petrovich! Eh?

Who raises you in rank and draws you up a pension?

Maxim Petrovich! Yes. Now, pigmies of to-day!

* That is, he was covered with decorations.

CHATSKY: You're right! We're stupider of late.

You well may mourn the world you cherished!

And how compare or contemplate

The age we have with what has perished?

'Tis hard to credit now, though fresh is its renown,

How he was first in fame, whose neck most oft was bending;

In peace, not war, they bowed their rivals down,

Bowed with obeisances unending.

One's down, another's up and triumphs to his face,

For those more lucky still spins flattery like lace.

A downright age of terror and submission,

And all beneath the mask of zeal to serve your tsar.

Your worthy uncle's peace no words of mine shall mar;

We won't disturb his soul's condition;

But nowadays who'd say, the trouble it was worth

Even in an ardor of effacement,

For nothing but your neighbor's mirth

To break your neck in self-abasement.

Yet old contemporary, Jones,

Perked up that lucky fall to see,

And shaking in his aged bones,

He mumbled, I'll be bound: "If that were only me!"

'Tis true, he's everywhere, the man that loves to crawl,

But shame can bridle now, and ridicule appall;

No wonder now our tsars of largess are more chary.

FAMUSOV: Oh, God! He's joined the Carbonari.

CHATSKY: No! Now of different stuff we're made—

FAMUSOV: A dangerous fellow this!

CHATSKY: Yes, now we breathe more free;

We don't all hurry off to join the clowns' brigade.

FAMUSOV: Hark, how he talks!—talks as he writes, you see.

CHATSKY: To call at patron's house, and at the ceiling stare,

To listen to the talk, to shuffle feet, to dine,

Pick up a kerchief, fetch a chair—

FAMUSOV: He's preaching license! Monstrous fine!

CHATSKY: A man who goes abroad or lives on his estate—

FAMUSOV: Won't own the powers that rule the state.

CHATSKY: Who serves his work and not his friends—

FAMUSOV: I'd see those gentlemen should never come in range

Where Petersburg or Moscow ends.

CHATSKY: Well, well! We'll give your thoughts a change.

FAMUSOV: I'll stand no more of this vexation.

CHATSKY: I haven't spared your generation,

And now I'll leave the laugh to you:

Then answer—do!

And turn it back on us again!

I'll grin and bear; I won't complain.

FAMUSOV: I won't even know you, sir. Such ways, I can't abide them.

CHATSKY: I've finished!

FAMUSOV: Never mind, my ears are closed.

CHATSKY: Why, I'll put nothing bad inside them.

FAMUSOV (*speaking fast*): They kick their heels wherever they're disposed;

When they come home, d'you think they'll live in peace?

CHATSKY: I've stopped!

FAMUSOV: When will this persecution cease?

CHATSKY: I have no wish to add a sentence.

FAMUSOV: Leave my poor soul some leisure for repentance!

(SERVANT *comes in.*)

SCENE III

The same and SERVANT

SERVANT: Sir, Colonel Skalozub.

FAMUSOV (*seeing and hearing nothing*): They'll put you through the mill;

As sure as eggs is eggs, they will.

CHATSKY: There's some one called. They've come to find you.

FAMUSOV: Won't listen! Take him off!

CHATSKY: Your servant, just behind you!

FAMUSOV: Won't listen. Into court, confound you!

CHATSKY: They're calling you. Do please look round you!

FAMUSOV (*turning around*): What! Mutiny! There's rows to come.

SERVANT: Sir, Colonel Skalozub. Am I to ask him in?

FAMUSOV (*rising*): You fool, how often must I din?

Yes, beg, invite, ask in: yes, say that I'm at home;

Say I'm delighted! Hurry up and clear!

(SERVANT *goes out.*)

Now, please, my dear good sir, be careful while he's here;

He's known—the best of reputations;

Snapped up a host of various decorations;

Promoted fast, and extra pay;

They'll make him general any day.

Now do, for heaven's sake, keep quiet as you can.

Oh, Alexander! That's not good, my son!

He often comes to call, good man,

And I'm at home to every one;

These Moscow tongues have got no conscience;

They'll tell you Skalozub will marry Sophy. Nonsense!

I dare say he'd be very glad indeed;

As far as I can see, there's no such urgent need

To marry her to-morrow or to-day;

You see, the girl is young, and heaven must take its way.

Now please! When he comes in, don't argue or get rash,

And drop these wild ideas: I'm sure they're utter trash.

Well, there! He doesn't come! I'm really mystified:

Ah, yes, they've shown him in the other side. (*Goes out quickly.*)

SCENE IV

CHATSKY *alone*

CHATSKY: Lord! How he skips and fusses round!

But Sophy—hasn't she indeed some suitor found?

For some time past it seems, she's quite estranged from me;

The thing was bound to be!

Who is this Skalozub? Papa is clearly won;

Perhaps Papa is not the only one.

If three whole years away you roam,

Don't count on love when you come home.

(*COLONEL SKALOZUB comes in with FAMUSOV.*)

SCENE V

CHATSKY, FAMUSOV, SKALOZUB

FAMUSOV: Sergey Sergeich, step this way!

Come closer! Here's a cozy seat.

We'll warm you: it's a chilly day.

I'll slip the shutter and let out the heat.

SKALOZUB (*in deep bass*): Don't move, I'll get my fingers to it;

An honest officer can never let you do it.

FAMUSOV: What, mayn't one lift a foot to put one's friends at ease?

Sergey Sergeich, really, please!

Let's have your hat, your sword belt, come!

Now, there's the sofa; make yourself at home!

SKALOZUB: Oh! any seat you please, whichever is to spare.

(*All three sit down; CHATSKY apart.*)

FAMUSOV: Ah, just before we start our conversation—

I'd like to think you're some relation—

Though distant—not to quarrel who is heir!

You didn't know—some time since I did;

Your cousin I must thank: 'twas he confided.

Nastasya Saltykov, it seems, was a connection.

SKALOZUB: I haven't any recollection!

You see, I never served with her.

FAMUSOV: Come, Colonel! That's not like you, sir!

Now I to kinsfolk am respectful as can be,

I'd find them at the bottom of the sea!

Outsiders I have few for service here: the others

Are nearly always sons of cousins, sisters, brothers.

Molchalin is the only one;

But you should see the work he's done.

Each time one must present to post or decoration,

Well, how can one neglect the man that's a relation!

But as for that, I know your cousin: he attaches

The greatest value to the help that you conferred.

SKALOZUB: Eighteen-thirteen, it was. We both were in dispatches,
First in the Tenth Chasseurs, and then the Forty-third.

FAMUSOV: If I'd a son like that, I'd swell with exultation;
I think his button-hole has got some decoration.

SKALOZUB: The third of August, yes; we held to the last gasp;

He got the ribbon, I the clasp.

FAMUSOV: As smart as smart can be, a soldier in a dozen,

A charming fellow too—your cousin.

SKALOZUB: Ah! From the narrow path he all too prone to swerve is!
He got promotion—all at once he left the service.

He's in the country—reading, don't you know?

FAMUSOV: That's you young men; you read, and down you go.

But you yourself kept straight all through—

A colonel long ago, not long a soldier too.

SKALOZUB: In brother officers my luck has seldom missed,

There's always places to be filled:

Some of my seniors were dismissed;

And lots of them, you see, got killed.

FAMUSOV: To those with whom He's pleased, there's naught the Lord
denies!

SKALOZUB: But some of us, you know, were quicker still to rise.
The Twelfth Division now—that's looking pretty near—

You only need to name our present brigadier.

FAMUSOV: But what is lacking to your own career?

SKALOZUB: I don't complain: I'm not left out.
To get my regiment I've been kept a year in doubt—

FAMUSOV: You want your regiment, yes!

Apart from that, as I should guess,
The rate you go, you're quite a flyer!

SKALOZUB: By no means! In the corps there's several are higher:
I joined the service, sir, in eighteen-nine,

But if you want your step, there's many a different way;

I'm a philosopher; I don't at all repine,

As long as I am general some fine day.

FAMUSOV: I find you're very right. God keep you safe and sound

And make you general! Then look round—

You can't put off for all your life—

We've got to find the general's wife.

SKALOZUB: What, wed? I've not the least objection.

FAMUSOV: We've all a sister, niece, or child. You'll make selection.

No fear, sir, of a dearth of spinsters here;

You see them sprouting year by year.

Come, friend, you'll own that—search the whole world round—

A capital like Moscow can't be found.

SKALOZUB: The city's circuit is enormous, quite.

FAMUSOV: Such taste, my boy, such manners exquisite!

In all, some old tradition runs;

For instance, by our rule—and nothing can be juster—

The father's honor is the son's.

A third-rate man, if only he can muster

Two thousand serfs, why he may match

With all dispatch:

Another may be smart, may boast and make more fuss,

"He's bright!" we'll say: "He's got his wits collected!

But pass as son-in-law! He won't bamboozle us."

It's only here, you see, nobility's respected.

Is that the only thing? Take hospitality:

There's not a stranger but will welcome be;

Invited guest or not, it's open door;

For foreigners, why all the more.

No matter, honest man or not,

For us it's all the same: there's dinner for the lot.

From head to foot, whoe'er they be,

On all our Muscovites a special stamp you'll see.

Be pleased to look at our young men,

Our youths, our sons and grandchildren. Fine creatures!

We lecture them; but nine in ten

In fifteen years, you'll see, will teach their teachers!
 And then our elders too—no matter what discussed is,
 When once they're under way, each sentence Lord Chief Justice!
 The real old family tree; each one of them counts double;
 And of the Government their talk's at times so clever—

If some one overheard them, there'd be trouble.
 Not that they'd introduce new-fangled notions—never!
 God bless you, no! Just watch the row they'll raise
 On this, on that, more often just on naught,
 They'll wrangle, make a noise and . . . go their ways!*

They're all ex-chancellors for wisdom and for thought.

No, I assure you—not at once, no doubt,
 But in the end you'll never leave them out.

And then our ladies! Just you try and master them!
 The ladies judge us all; the ladies who'll condemn?
 When ladies at their cards set up a great to-do,
 Pray God for patience then! Oh, I've been married too!

Give them commands along the front-line trenches,
 Send them to sit upon the senate benches!

Irena Vlashevna! Lukerya Alexevna!

Tatyana Yuryevna! Pulcheriya Andrevna!

And then to see our girls—you'll look and faint away!

His Majesty the King of Prussia came this way; †
 He couldn't praise too high the Moscow ladies' graces,

Their nice behavior, not their faces.

And really, are there girls more highly bred than they?

They make themselves so grand in fine array
 With velvet, taffeta and *crêpe*;

See how their lips each word elaborately shape!

How cleverly they'll trill each high top note
 Of elegant French airs erotic!

They simply love a soldier's coat;
 But that's because they're patriotic.

Why, surely, all the whole world round,
 Another capital like Moscow can't be found.

SKALOZUB: I think there's no denying
 The fire contributed to Moscow's beautifying.‡

* This description of meetings held to criticize the Government is almost identical in language with some words of the Decembrist leader Pestel in his evidence on the Decembrist Conspiracy.

† King Frederick William III, vanquished by Napoleon at Jena (1805); from 1813 onwards an intimate friend of Alexander I.

‡ Great pains were taken with the rebuilding of Moscow after the Fire of 1812.

FAMUSOV: Oh, please don't talk of that: the croakers had their fears;
 But houses, pavements, streets—I never!
 Brand-new our Moscow now appears.

CHATSKY: New streets, but prejudices old as ever.

Rejoice, my friends! No lapse of years,
 Nor fashions, no, nor fires, from them can sever.

FAMUSOV: Remember! Hold your tongue, and don't annoy!

I asked you to be still: it's not a mighty favor.

Excuse me, Colonel, he's my friend, is this young shaver:

He's poor old Andrew Chatsky's only boy;

Not in the service—can't approve of such vocations.

He'd be so useful if he'd take the pains;

Sad! Very sad! For he's a lad with brains,

First class at writing and translations:

One cannot but regret that one so bright as he—

CHATSKY: Oh, can't you please regret for some one else than me?

I find your praise as vexing as your blame.

FAMUSOV: Not only I—they all condemn the same.

CHATSKY: Who are our judges? Obsolete as owls,

At all that's free in life they raise their senseless howls.

From fly-worn newspapers they get their last idea,

The Siege of Eighty-eight,* the Conquest of Crimea;

They always sing the same old song,

And, always waiting to reprove one,

Won't see what in themselves is wrong—

That age does not improve one.

Show us those worthy sirs, the fathers of the country,

The men that ought to fix the tone for all and sundry;

Why, surely, it is these, enriched with plunder,

Who've dodged the law-court through their friends and their relations

And build a splendid house, a very nine days' wonder,

In which they run to waste in feasts and dissipations;

And where their foreign guests will never make them yield

Of that dear age that's gone, the worst extravagances!

In Moscow find a man whose mouth has not been sealed

By dinners, supper-parties, dances!

Or he to whom, with scarce our baby clothes outgrown,

You dragged us off to call, reluctant laggards,

For some strange reasons of your own—

* Ochakov, a strong fortress of the Turks, was besieged by a part of the army of Potemkin led by Suvorov in 1788. After he was wounded, the troops, suffering from frost and severe privations, themselves demanded to be led to the attack, and stormed the fortress, with enormous loss of life, on December 6 (17).

That veteran of titled blackguards!
 The crowd of servants he had got!
 With zealous service, in his hours of wine and strife
 'Twas often they had saved his honor and his life—
 One morning he exchanged three greyhounds for the lot!
 Or else the famous squire, who, just to fill his leisure,
 Bought up a serf ballet at every country fair,
 Tore children from the arms of parents in despair;
 His Zephyrs all his thought, his Cupids all his pleasure!
 The town was all agape, to gaze on charms so great,
 But as his creditors refused to wait,
 Poor Cupids, they were sold in detail,
 The Zephyrs, too, disposed of retail.
 And all of these have lived to old age vigorous,
 And this the kind of man our poverty bids praise!
 These are our judges stern, the censors of our ways!
 And now the moment one of us,
 Of us young folks, is found these low maneuvers spurning,
 No claimant bold for place, of rank not covetous,
 Who plunges in his books a mind that thirsts for learning—
 If God's own grace in him has kindled the desire
 For high creative arts, and all that's fair and true,
 They all start shouting: "Robbers! Fire!
 A dangerous dreamer!"—That's the best they'll say for you.
 Oh, uniform! 'Tis nought but uniform! Before,
 Their feebleness of soul, their intellects so hollow
 Those handsome folds concealed with flourishes galore;
 And them we count it luck to follow.
 No less to uniform our wives and daughters bow.
 How long have I myself that weakness thrown behind me?
 I do not fear to yield to aught so childish now;
 But was it strange, with all the rest to find me?
 When nobles from the Court and heroes of the Guard
 To Moscow came in splendor vying,
 Then how our women all hurrah'd,
 And how they sent their bonnets flying.
 FAMUSOV (*aside*): Oh dear! I see the danger's growing.
 (*Aloud.*) Sergey Sergeich, I'll be going;
 There, in my study, I'll await you. (*Goes out.*)

SCENE VI

SKALOZUB and CHATSKY

SKALOZUB: I liked it—how in this debate you
 Hit off with such a spicy flavor
 The way all Moscow loves to favor
 The public pets, the Guard, the Guardsmen—great big loobies,
 Their facings and their gold! The town adores the boobies.
 Now our First Army boys—in what are they behind?
 Our lads are just as smart; they've just as slender figures;
 With us the officers you'll find!—
 Why even some of them can gabble French like niggers.
 (SOPHYA and LIZA run in.)

SCENE VII

SKALOZUB, CHATSKY, SOPHYA, LIZA

SOPHYA (*rushing to the window*): Good God! He's fallen down; it's
 killed him! (*Falls in a faint.*)
 CHATSKY: Who?
 SKALOZUB: Who is it?
 CHATSKY: Who's got hurt?
 LIZA: She's nearly dead with fright.
 SKALOZUB: But who? Where did he fall?
 CHATSKY: And where did he fall to?
 SKALOZUB: I hope our good old friend's all right.
 LIZA (*busy with her mistress*): You'll never dodge your fate when
 once your hour is here.
 Molchalin tried to mount: he hadn't found his seat,
 The horse began to rear,
 And down he came headforemost on the street.
 SKALOZUB: He must have tugged the reins; he can't know how to ride;
 I'll see which way he fell—upon his chest or side. (*Goes out.*)

SCENE VIII

CHATSKY, SOPHYA, LIZA

CHATSKY: Quick! Tell me how to be of use!
 LIZA (*pointing*): There's water in that room, no doubt.
 (CHATSKY runs and brings it; all that follows is in a whisper till
 SOPHYA recovers.)

LIZA: Pour out a glass!

CHATSKY: I've poured it out.

Now quick, and get her neckband loose;

Some vinegar to rub her brow!

There! Sprinkle with the water! Now!

She breathes more free, if close you scan!

Something to fan her!

LIZA: Here's a fan.

CHATSKY (*at the window*): Come here! Look out!

Molchalin's up and walks about.

The merest trifle scared her mind.

LIZA: Young ladies are that hopeless kind;

It's never mighty nerve they've showed

When folks fall headlong on the road.

CHATSKY: More water on her forehead pour!

That's right! Again, again!

SOPHYA (*with a deep sigh*): Who's standing near?

I'm half asleep, I'm sure.

(*Loud and fast.*) Where's he? How is he? Let me hear!

CHATSKY: He's free to break his neck, I know:

He needn't do for you, to spare.

SOPHYA: It's murderous, the coldness that you show;

To see you, hear you speak, it's more than I can bear.

CHATSKY: You bid me run and chase to his assistance?

SOPHYA: Run out, yes, there's your place—and see what you can do!

CHATSKY: What! leave you here alone, with none to see to you?

SOPHYA: You're better at a distance.

Oh yes! Another's hurt for you is a diversion:

Why, if they killed your father, you'd not care.

(*To LIZA.*) Come out with me! Let's run!

LIZA (*leading her aside*): Think! What's this mad excursion?

He's safe and sound; just come to the window! There!

(*SOPHYA leans out of the window.*)

CHATSKY: Confusion, fainting fit, excitement, anger, fright!

To make one fall in such a plight,

It means your dearest friend has come to harm.

SOPHYA: They're coming in. Poor man! He cannot lift his arm!

CHATSKY: Could I be killed with him!

LIZA: For company, I see.

SOPHYA: Oh no! Just wish and let it be!

(*SKALOZUB and MOLCHALIN come in, the latter with his arm bandaged.*)

SCENE IX

SOPHYA, LIZA, CHATSKY, SKALOZUB, MOLCHALIN

SKALOZUB: Come back to life! No mischief done!

He's slightly hurt his arm;

Except for that, it's all a false alarm.

MOLCHALIN: I gave you all a scare; forgive me, every one!

SKALOZUB: Well, there! I didn't know that that's enough
To make you so upset. You came in such a flurry;

We all had such a scare: you fainted off,

And see! There's nothing but the worry.

SOPHYA (*not looking at any one*):

Oh yes, I see: it's quite absurd,

Yet even now I'm on the tremble!

CHATSKY (*aside*): To him no single word.

SOPHYA (*as before*): But as for me, I won't dissemble,

No! I'm no coward; I'm all right:

Suppose the trap's upset—when once it's up, next minute,

Why there I'm gayly seated in it;

And yet the least mishap to others scares me quite,

Although the accident may do no harm whatever—

With total strangers too—in short one never tells.

CHATSKY (*aside*): She wants to ask him to forgive her

For having pitied some one else.

SKALOZUB: I've got a little tale to tell:

An elderly princess there is, a seasoned belle,

A widow, horsewoman—but scant and scunter

The cavaliers who'll take her for a canter.

Last week she had an awful tumble!

The groom was counting flies and so contrived to fumble.

Apart from that, they say, she's clumsy as can be;

So now, poor dame, she's one rib shorter,

And wants a husband to support her.

SOPHYA (*to CHATSKY*): Oh, Mr. Chatsky, now I see
Your heart to all mankind beats warm and energetic;

To all your neighbor's ills you are so sympathetic.

CHATSKY: No doubt, miss. That I've made quite plain

By all the pains I took just now,

The time I bathed and wiped your brow.

I cannot say for whom—I brought you back again.

(*Takes his hat and goes out.*)

SCENE X

SOPHYA, LIZA, SKALOZUB, MOLCHALIN

SOPHYA (*to* SKALOZUB): You'll come this evening?

SKALOZUB: When does it begin?

SOPHYA: Well, not too late! Our friends, our relatives drop in;
We've planned a little dance. As our bereavement's recent,
A ball would not be decent.SKALOZUB: Yes, I'll be there; but now your good papa expects.
I'll say good-by.

SOPHYA: Good-by, sir.

SKALOZUB (*shakes hands with* MOLCHALIN): My respects.
(*Goes out.*)

SCENE XI

SOPHYA, LIZA, MOLCHALIN

SOPHYA: Molchalin, all the time I thought my mind would go!
How much your life to me, you surely ought to know;
Why do you risk it, then?— So carelessly you ride!Your arm, now, tell me is it dressed?
I'll fetch some liniment, you ought to take a rest.
Send for the doctor: you've no right to let it slide.

MOLCHALIN: I tied my kerchief round; since then it doesn't ache.

LIZA: It's humbug, I'm prepared to stake.
Except to hide his face, he'll need no handkerchief:
But that's no humbug, that you both will come to grief.
You'll see how Chatsky's tongue this spicy story retails,And Skalozub, he'll shake his head, I'll vow:
He'll tell about the faint, he'll add a hundred details;
He's quick to take a joke: who isn't witty now?

SOPHYA: With which of them have I to do?

I'll choose my friends and own them too.
Molchalin, do you think I didn't have to try?

When they came in, no word I'd say;

I dared not breathe while they were by,

Ask how you felt or glance your way.

MOLCHALIN: No, Sophy Pavlovna, you've no dissimulation.

SOPHYA: And how could I be careful then?

I nearly jumped straight out in front of all those men.

For whom have I to care? Not them nor all creation.

They'll laugh, well, let them laugh. They'll spite, then let them spite.

MOLCHALIN: This openness of yours might hurt us, might it not?

SOPHYA: You surely never think they'll call you out to fight?

MOLCHALIN: Alas! Malicious tongues are worse than pistol shot!

LIZA (to SOPHYA): Well, there's your father's room: all three are in it.

Now can't you just look round a minute

With merry face, no cloud upon it?

When people say what suits our whim,

How glad we are to fasten on it!

And Mr. Chatsky, talk to him

Of olden times, of frolics youthful—

Tell any tale that's not untruthful!

A pretty smile, a word or two—

And what will not a lover do?

MOLCHALIN: I hardly dare advise what's best.

SOPHYA: All right, I'll stop my tears and cozen and endear;

I'm much afraid my art will scarcely bear the test.

Oh, why on earth did fate send Chatsky here? (*Goes out.*)

SCENE XII

MOLCHALIN and LIZA

MOLCHALIN (to LIZA): You are a jolly girl! So lively!

LIZA:

Steady!

You let me go! There's two of you already.

MOLCHALIN: You've such a pretty face, my beauty!

How fond I am of you!

LIZA:

And mistress?

MOLCHALIN:

That's from duty.

But you— (*Tries to embrace her.*)

LIZA:

From boredom I should say—

Just take that arm away!

MOLCHALIN: I've got three little things, you know;

A dressing-case—a neater can't be found—

A mirror on the lid, a mirror just below,

With tracery in gilt all round;

A cushion stitched with beads, to please a pretty girl;

A necessaire in mother-of-pearl,

Knives, needlecase— Oh, what could make you prouder?

And tiny pearls ground up to toilet powder,

With ointment for the lips or any use one asks,

And scents like mignonette and jessamine in flasks.

LIZA: You know, with presents I shall not be won;

But why, if I may ask politely,

With missus so demure and with her maid so sprightly?

MOLCHALIN: I don't feel well to-day: I'll keep my bandage on.

Come in to lunch with me, sweet thing,

And there I'll tell you everything.

(*He goes out by the side door. SOPHYA comes in.*)

SCENE XIII

SOPHYA and LIZA

SOPHYA: I've been to see papa: there's nobody at home,

I don't feel well to-day, to lunch I shall not come;

Please let Molchalin know and send him to me soon:

He'll stay with me this afternoon.

(*Goes out.*)

SCENE XIV

LIZA alone

LIZA: What people we have here! You see,

She's after him: he's after me.

I'll have no truck with love: I'm only a spectator;

Yet how could I be cold to Peterkin the waiter?

ACT III

SCENE I

CHATSKY, later SOPHYA

CHATSKY: I'll wait for you and make you tell, my pretty!

Molchalin! Skalozub! Now which does she prefer?

Molchalin?—Too great fool for her;

The creature calls for pity!

Then has he learned some sense?—The Colonel?

Swashbuckler, snorter, brag infernal!

Maneuvers and mazurkas—first-rate stuff!

That's love! it's always blindman's buff.

For me—(*SOPHYA comes in.*) It's you. I'm glad you came.
Exactly what I hoped.

SOPHYA (*aside*): I cannot say the same.

CHATSKY: Of course, it isn't me you're seeking?

SOPHYA: I wasn't seeking you.

CHATSKY: Now, please excuse me speaking,

For claim or need to know I've none:

Do tell me whom you love!

SOPHYA: Good gracious! Every one!

CHATSKY: But whom do you prefer?

SOPHYA: Why, first relations come.

CHATSKY: And all before myself?

SOPHYA: Well, some!

CHATSKY (*aside*): And what is it I want when all is said and done?

She'll see me hang, and find it's fun.

SOPHYA: Well! Shall I tell you what I really feel?

If some one's conduct has some oddness in it,

Your merriment you can't conceal;

You fire off something smart that very minute,

But you yourself—

CHATSKY: And I? The oddness is my own.

SOPHYA: Yes, threatening looks and angry tone;

Yourself, you've all the queerness you're eschewing,

A storm above oneself there's not much sense in brewing.

CHATSKY: I'm odd; so's every one, I find,

But idiots of the common kind.

Molchalin I might take.

SOPHYA: Oh, do take some one new.

I see on every one your spite you want to spend;

I think I'll go away: then I shan't hinder you.

CHATSKY (*restraining her*): No! No! Don't go. (*Aside.*) For once I will pretend.

(*Aloud.*) Let's drop these useless disputations.

Molchalin must forgive: I'm not quite fair, I know,

Perhaps he's not the same as three whole years ago;

One sometimes sees these sudden transformations
Of climates, governments, of manners and of minds;

Some folks we took for fools are great men now, one finds:

One in the army, one is now a third-rate poet,

And one—I'll skip the name—but all your friends would know it.

Of late, particularly, more than ever

There's not a soul that isn't clever.

Let's grant Molchalin's mind is keen, his genius bold,

But do you find in him such passionate ardor flashes,

That all the great wide world can hold,

Except for you, is dust and ashes?

That every heartbeat takes its measure
 And comes more quick for love of you,
 That nothing he can think and nothing he can do
 But has one mainspring—you, your pleasure?
 'Tis that I feel myself, though that I ne'er can tell;
 But what now boils in me, the maddening thoughts that rise—
 Not to my bitterest foe I'd ever wish such hell.

But he, he'll never speak or raise his eyes;
 Of course he's humble! Such as he have little spirit.
 God knows in him what hidden charm you find.
 God knows if you in him have seen some fancied merit
 Which never in his life has come into his mind.

Maybe your fondness takes the whim,
 Of your good points to lend the best to him.
 It is not he's to blame; a hundred times 'tis you.
 He's clever—good!—each hour more clever too;
 But say! Is he worth you? I ask you that alone.
 To help that I my loss may bear without a groan,
 Do tell me!—haven't we grown up with one another?

Just tell me as a friend, a brother;—

'Tis that I so much wish to know!

If so,

Oh, I'll be wise in time, ere madness has attacked me;
 I'll take me straight away, grow cool and then grow cold;
 I'll never think of love; and ere the year is old,
 I'll lose me in the world, forget or even distract me!

SOPHYA (*aside*): Against my will I've sent him mad!

(To CHATSKY): What use in feigning?

Molchalin is in luck to have two arms remaining.

My keenest sympathy he naturally had;

But you, who chanced to see him fall—

It seemed to beat your calculations

That people might be kind alike to one and all.

But maybe there is truth in your insinuations;

I take him 'neath my wing; it shields him like a mother's;

But why is your own tongue—I ask you straight—

So rough and inconsiderate,

So unabashed in your contempt for others,

That even the meekest man may have no mercy? Shame!

It's quite enough to breathe his name—

You fire off witticisms that never cease.

You joke and joke all day! Do leave us all in peace!

CHATSKY: Oh, Heavens! Then am I just some jester, pray,

Who only wants to laugh all day?
I laugh, when funny fellows pass before me;

But as a rule, they simply bore me.

SOPHYA: You vent on every one your own caprice and whim.

Molchalin wouldn't worry you so much,
If you and he came closer into touch.

CHATSKY (*hotly*): But why are you yourself in such close touch with him?

SOPHYA: I never tried. We came to know each other;
You see that all the house regard him as a brother.

Three years with my papa he lives;

Papa gets angry out of season,
Molchalin holds his tongue and brings him round to reason,
In sheer goodheartedness forgives.

I'll tell you more:

There's pleasures that he might run after;
But no! he never stirs outside his elders' door.

We joke and die of laughter:

He sits all day with them—that can't be very gay—
And plays at cards—

CHATSKY: Plays cards all day?

Keeps silence; no ill words affect him?

(*Aside.*) Oh no! She doesn't even respect him.

SOPHYA: I know he hasn't got that sort of mind
Which some so marvelous and some so noxious find;
A quick, a brilliant mind, the kind that turns one snappy,
That loves to rake the world clean through and through
That then the world at least may mention you!

Can such a mind as that make any household happy?

CHATSKY: Satire and morals then is all you have to say.

(*Aside.*) She holds him cheap; it's clear as day.

SOPHYA: In short, the best of creatures,
The kindest: he's modest, yielding, mild;

No trace of worry on his features;

In heart he is as guileless as a child.

Not he your friends to bits will take,

And that's what makes me like him so.

CHATSKY (*aside*): She jests! She doesn't love him! No!

(*To SOPHYA.*) Well, I myself might help to make

Molchalin's portrait more complete!

But Skalozub! The man's a treat,

The army's champion, bolt upright,

So stout and firm of stance,

In face and voice the hero quite—

SOPHYA: But not of my romance.

(LIZA comes in.)

CHATSKY: Not yours? There's none could guess you, if he tried.

SCENE II

CHATSKY, SOPHYA, LIZA

LIZA (*in a whisper to SOPHYA*): Oh, please, miss! Waiting just outside

There's Mr. Alexey Molchalin.

SOPHYA (*to CHATSKY*): Excuse me, I must go without the least delay.

CHATSKY: Where?

SOPHYA: To my coiffeur.

CHATSKY: Damn!

SOPHYA: The curling irons calling!

CHATSKY: Then let them!

SOPHYA: No, I can't! Our guests are on their way.

CHATSKY: Lord keep you!—Still unsolved what's puzzled me so oft!
Yet let me all the same look in—I'll tread so soft—

For just five minutes to my lady's room.

The walls, the air—there all's so pleasant!

'Twill warm me, give me life, and lift the cloud of gloom.

There, of what's past and gone at least the memory's present.

I won't sit down; step in, look round and come away;

Then—think!—the English Club's most stanch habitué,

I'll sacrifice to fame for days about the merit

Of all Molchalin's wit and all the Colonel's spirit.

(SOPHYA shrugs her shoulders, goes off to her room and locks herself in; LIZA goes with her.)

SCENE III

CHATSKY, *later* MOLCHALIN

CHATSKY: Molchalin for her choice! Oh, Sophy, it's bewildering!

Yet good enough to marry. Mind, poor stuff;

But just for having children,

What idiot but has wits enough?

Obliging, not too bold; his face has color in it. (MOLCHALIN comes in.)

On tiptoe here he comes: he hasn't much to say.

What spell was on her heart, that such as he could win it?

(*To MOLCHALIN.*) Molchalin, you and I to-day

Have hardly had a moment clear:

Well, how do you like living here?

The world deals kindly with you, does it?

MOLCHALIN: Sir, just the same!

CHATSKY:

Then earlier, how was it?

MOLCHALIN: Why, day by day, and now as then.

CHATSKY: From pen to cards, and back from cards to pen;

No doubt the hour is fixed for every ebb and flow!

MOLCHALIN: My merits and my work according,

The Record Office, you may know,

Three times have picked me for rewarding.

CHATSKY: You won't be last, then, in the race?

MOLCHALIN: No, each has got his talent.

CHATSKY:

And with you?

MOLCHALIN:

I've two:

I'm quite correct, and know my place.

CHATSKY: A wondrous pair, for sure: all mine won't match with these!

MOLCHALIN: You never got a rise? Your service did not please?

CHATSKY: 'Tis men that give promotions,

And men may have mistaken notions.

MOLCHALIN: We all were so surprised—

CHATSKY:

And where was the surprise?

MOLCHALIN: We all were sorry—

CHATSKY:

Dry your eyes!

MOLCHALIN: Tatyana Yuryevna was talking once of you:

From Petersburg she'd just returned—

How all the ministers you knew,

Then how you broke—

CHATSKY: And how is she concerned?

MOLCHALIN: Tatyana Yuryevna?

CHATSKY:

Don't know her, I confess.

MOLCHALIN: Tatyana Yuryevna?

CHATSKY:

I never met the dame;

I've heard she is a fool—

MOLCHALIN: Come, come! That's not the same!

Tatyana Yuryevna, the well-known patroness!

The people in the highest stations

Are all her friends or her relations;

Tatyana Yuryevna, if once on her you'd call—

CHATSKY: Why should I?

MOLCHALIN:

Well! We sometimes find

Our best protectors where we don't expect at all.

CHATSKY: My calls on lady friends are hardly of that kind.

MOLCHALIN: So simple, nice, and kind—she mothers high and low!

The balls she gives, they're hard to beat;

From Christmas on till Lent they go:

In summer, parties at her country seat.

You'll really have to serve in Moscow like the rest,

And get a rise in rank, and live upon the best!

CHATSKY: When I'm at work—no pleasures till it's through;

And when I play the fool, I do.

To jumble up such various kinds of fun

There's many take delight: for me, I am not one.

MOLCHALIN: Excuse me if I fail to follow your objection!

Foma Fomich himself—you know him?

CHATSKY: Certainly.

MOLCHALIN: Three Ministers in turn he served as Head of Section,

And then they moved him here.

CHATSKY: That's he:

The stupidest of men, with nothing in his noddle.

MOLCHALIN: Come, come! For model style there's none is matched
with his.

You've read him?

CHATSKY: I can't read stupidities,
Still less if they are model.

MOLCHALIN: I was more lucky! 'Twas with pleasure that I read it.
I'm not an author—

CHATSKY: No! And no one would have said it!

MOLCHALIN: I couldn't dare to give a judgment that is serious—

CHATSKY: But why be so mysterious?

MOLCHALIN: At my age, one must not be known

To have opinions of one's own.

CHATSKY: Excuse me, we are neither of us babies:

Why can't we say straight out when other folks are gabies?

MOLCHALIN: We've got to go by others, don't you know.

CHATSKY: We've got to! Why on earth?

MOLCHALIN: Because our rank is low.

CHATSKY (*almost aloud*): With such a soul, with feelings of this sort,
Beloved? The artful girl was simply making sport!

SCENE IV

Evening. All doors open, except to SOPHYA's room. One sees a vista of lighted rooms. Servants run about. One of them, the chief, says:—

SERVANT: Here, Tom and Fred! Look sharp! Don't talk!
We want the card tables and candles! Brushes! Chalk!

(*Knocks at SOPHYA's door.*)

Now, Lizabeth, be off to missus! Look alive!

Natalya Dmitrievna and husband!— Give her word!

Another carriage in the drive! (*They go off: only CHATSKY is left.*)
(NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA comes in.)

SCENE V

CHATSKY and NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA

NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA: It must be some mistake! The likeness is absurd.

Oh, Mr. Chatsky! can it be?

CHATSKY: You seem to feel some doubt, and look me up all over! I hardly think three years have so much altered me.

NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA: I thought that you were far from Moscow—still a rover!

You've been here long?

CHATSKY: Just come.

NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA: Long stay?

CHATSKY: Depends on luck.

But you!—to look at you, say, who would not be struck!

You're plumper than you were, and what a lovely creature;

It's younger, fresher, still you grow!

Bright eyes, bright cheeks, all bright, such play in every feature.

NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA: I'm married.

CHATSKY: Why not tell me long ago?

NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA: A charming husband too! He's with me here to-night,

I'll introduce you now: all right?

CHATSKY: Please do!

NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA: I'll tell you in advance—

You'll get on splendidly. You'll like him at first glance.

CHATSKY: Your husband? Yes, of course.

NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA: No! That's not it, good sir!

Platon Mikhaylych is my dearest, my desired;

Was in the army, now retired;

And all who knew him then, declare there's not a doubt—

He is so brave, he is so clever—

That if he'd only not sold out

The Moscow Chief Command was his as sure as ever.

(PLATON MIKHAYLOVICH comes in.)

SCENE VI

CHATSKY, NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA, PLATON MIKHAYLOVICH

NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA: Here's my Platon Mikhaylych!

CHATSKY:

Pooh!

Old friend of mine: we met long since. Well, how are you?

PLATON MIKHAYLOVICH: Well—Chatsky, boy, how do?

CHATSKY:

Old chap, that's excellent.

I give you a good mark. Your time has been well spent.

PLATON MIKHAYLOVICH: My boy, you see:

The Moscow married man, that's me!

CHATSKY: Forgot the noise of camps, old chums, associations?

You stand at ease?

PLATON MIKHAYLOVICH: Oh no! I have my occupations;

I play the flute—duet, A flat.

CHATSKY: The one you played five years ago? Still that?

Well, husbands, in their tastes, should first of all be steady.

PLATON MIKHAYLOVICH: You wed, my boy—then think of me!

Quite soon

From boredom, you as well will whistle just one tune.

CHATSKY: From boredom! What! You pay that toll already?

NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA: Platon had lots to do, his day was very full,

The drill and the parades, or some young colt to bridle.

He misses it; at times he finds the mornings dull.

CHATSKY: But who on earth, my friend, commands you to be idle?

Join up! Your squadron waits. Staff work for you, or major's?

NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA: My poor Platon, you see, in health is far from strong.

CHATSKY: What, weak in health? How long?

NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA: It's rheumatism with headaches—and such ragers!

CHATSKY: Then move about! The south, the country's my advice,

Take rides each day; in June, the country's paradise.

NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA: Platon Mikhaylych loves the town,

Loves Moscow. In the wilds it's death to settle down.

CHATSKY: Loves town? Loves Moscow? Can't see how!

You've not forgot the past?

PLATON MIKHAYLOVICH: Ah, that's all altered now!

NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA: Oh, look, my dear!

The draught is simply dreadful here.

You're horribly exposed; your waistcoat's open quite.

PLATON MIKHAYLOVICH: My boy, I'm not the same!

NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA: Do own for once I'm right!
Do button up your waistcoat more!

PLATON MIKHAYLOVICH (*indifferently*): All right!

NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA: Do move away: stand further from that door!

PLATON MIKHAYLOVICH: My boy, I'm not the same!

NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA: My angel, I implore,

A wee bit further from the doorway budge.

PLATON MIKHAYLOVICH (*raising his eyes*): Oh, please, old girl!

CHATSKY: Well! Heaven must be your judge!

Indeed, it's quick enough you've learned this fiddle-faddle!

Let's see—the end of eighteen-three,

I met you at the front: each morning, boot in saddle

And off upon your charger, bold and free!—

In front or in the rear the autumn wind might blow.

PLATON MIKHAYLOVICH (*with a sigh*): A splendid time, my boy, but that was long ago.

(PRINCE and PRINCESS TUGOUKHOVSKY and the six young PRINCESSES *come in*.)

SCENE VII

The same and PRINCE and PRINCESS TUGOUKHOVSKY and their six DAUGHTERS

NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA (*in a mincing voice*): Prince Petr Ilyich!
My dear Princess! It's you!

Princess Zizi! Mimi!

(*Sounding kisses: then they sit down and look each other over from head to foot.*)

FIRST PRINCESS: Oh, what a lovely scheme!

SECOND PRINCESS: What darling little pleats!

FIRST PRINCESS: The fringe is just a dream!

NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA: But wait until you see my satin tu-lur-lu.

THIRD PRINCESS: The *écharpe* my cousin gave me—such a treat!

FOURTH PRINCESS: Oh yes, the gray *barège*!

FIFTH PRINCESS: So charming!

SIXTH PRINCESS: Oh, it's sweet!

PRINCESS: Sh! Who's that over there? He bowed as we came past.

NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA: It's Chatsky, just arrived.

PRINCESS: Retired, I guess!

NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA: Yes, he's been traveling, he's back again at last.

PRINCESS (*impressively*): He's single?

NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA:

Yes!

Not married yet.

PRINCESS: Prince, Prince, come here! Don't wait!

PRINCE: Ah—hm. (*Turning his ear trumpet towards her.*)

PRINCESS: For Thursday night, our party—ask him straight!
Natalya Dmitrevna's acquaintance, yes, that's he.

PRINCE: Ee-hm. (*He goes off, hovers round CHATSKY and coughs.*)

PRINCESS: My chicks, you see!

They're pining for a ball!

Papa shall go and call;

For partners now are rare as rare can be.

A page-in-waiting?

NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA: No!

PRINCESS: Well off?

NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA: Oh, no!

PRINCESS: Prince, Prince! Don't go!

(*The COUNTESSSES HRYUMIN, grandmother and granddaughter, come in.*)

SCENE VIII

The same and the COUNTESSSES HRYUMIN

COUNTESS GRANDDAUGHTER: Oh, grand'maman! Who comes so early in the night?

We're first of all! (*Disappears into a side room.*)

PRINCESS: She does us honor!

She's first of all, and we are nobodies! There's spite!

A spinster all these years: the Lord have pity on her!

COUNTESS GRANDDAUGHTER (*comes back and turns her double lorgnette on CHATSKY*): M'sieu Chatsky! Back in town?

You've made no change in life?

CHATSKY: Well, how should I be changed?

COUNTESS GRANDDAUGHTER: You haven't brought a wife?

CHATSKY: And who was I to wed?

COUNTESS GRANDDAUGHTER: Abroad? For that who stops?

There's plenty make no calculations

And marry there, and give us nice relations

From ladies in the milliner shops.

CHATSKY: Poor fellows! Must they bear reproach and slur

From those whose shrine the milliner's shop is,

Because they venture to prefer

Originals to copies?

SCENE IX

The same and many other guests: among them ZAGORETSKY. Men come in, click heels, pass aside, wander from room to room and go off. SOPHYA comes out of her room. All move toward her.

COUNTESS GRANDDAUGHTER: *Eh! bon soir, vous voilà! Jamais trop diligente,*

Vous nous donnez toujours le plaisir de l'attente.

ZAGORETSKY (to SOPHYA): You've got your ticket for to-morrow's show?

SOPHYA: No!

ZAGORETSKY: Then let me hand you one: another's time were lost

To help you there, or I'm mistaken;

But Lord! the pains it cost!

The office—no, all taken.

The Manager—I know him well—

At six A.M.:—another sell!

Why, even last evening, everything sold out!

I plagued their lives; I pushed about,

And this one in the end I simply snatched by force,

From some one else—my friend, of course—

A grave old stay-at-home. All right:

He'll stay at home to-morrow night.

SOPHYA: Oh, thanks so much, and thank you double

For all your pains and trouble!

(Some others come in. Meanwhile ZAGORETSKY goes off to the men.)

ZAGORETSKY: Platon Mikhaylych!

PLATON MIKHAYLOVICH: Tramp!

Off to the women! Fool and foozle them, you scamp!

I'll let you have home truths, without all ceremonial,

Truths worse than any lie. *(To CHATSKY.)* Friend, here's his testimonial:

To speak with due respect and gentleness I'm staggered,

With men like these. He's much in vogue,

Shown up a scoundrel and a rogue;

Name—Zagoretsky: that's the blackguard.

Be careful there! He's sharp! He'll take you in, I tell you!

Don't sit at cards with him: he'll sell you.

ZAGORETSKY: Queer fellow! Snarls! but not the least desire of hurting!

CHATSKY: To you, then, insults seem diverting!

Apart from men's respect, there's lots of consolations:

Here it's abuse, there thanks and commendations.

PLATON MIKHAYLOVICH: Oh no, my boy! We all abuse him,
And all of us receive and use him.
(ZAGORETSKY is lost in the crowd. MADAME HLESTOVA comes in.)

SCENE X

The same and MADAME HLESTOVA

HLESTOVA (to SOPHYA): No easy work at sixty-five
To drag my bones to you! The time that I've been spending!
A good full hour from home! I'm only half alive!
A night as if the world was ending!
I brought—for company, you see—
My little negress, and my pup.
My dear, please feed them up;
They're hungry as can be:
Just send them out a bite to sup.
Ah, how d'you do, Princess? (*Sits down.*) Well, Sophy girl, my pet,
I've got to wait on me a nigger child like jet,
With curly hair and humpy back
And spiteful—like a cat in every knack,
As black as black, with hideous features,
To think Almighty God could make such creatures!
A fiend! I told her in the servants' hall to stay;
I'll call her!

SOPHYA: No! Some other day.

HLESTOVA: Imagine! Just like beasts, they take them out on show;
I heard that there—some town in the Crimea—
Who got her for me? Do you know?
Why, Zagoretsky! His idea. (ZAGORETSKY stands out of the crowd.)
An awful liar, sharper, thief! (ZAGORETSKY disappears.)
I'd bolt my door to him—but smart beyond belief
At services like this! For me and Sister Clare
Two little nigger girls he found at this year's fair;
He bought them, so he says—more likely, sharpened at play.
Well, there's a find for me! God keep him, anyway!
CHATSKY (*laughing, to PLATON MIKHAYLOVICH*): By praises such
as these one isn't greatly cheered!
Even Zagoretsky couldn't stand it, disappeared.
HLESTOVA: Now who's that merry wag? And what is his profession?
SOPHYA: What, that? It's Chatsky.
HLESTOVA: Well! He's not got much discretion!
What tickles him? What's there to laugh at?
Old age is not a thing to chaff at.

I noticed, when a boy, he danced with you, with ardor;
 I used to pinch his ears—I should have pinched them harder!
 (FAMUSOV comes in.)

SCENE XI

The same and FAMUSOV

FAMUSOV (*in a voice of thunder*): We're waiting for our Prince.
 And there he is!—and I got stranded in the hall.
 Where's Skalozub? He should be here long since.
 It seems he hasn't come: I'd pick him out from all.
 Where's Skalozub, Sergey Sergeich? Where?
 HLESTOVA: Oh, Lord! He's split my ear! It's worse than trumpet-
 blare!
 (SKALOZUB comes in.)

SCENE XII

The same and SKALOZUB, later MOLCHALIN

FAMUSOV: Sergey Sergeich, you're belated!
 And we—we've waited, waited, waited!
 (Comes up to HLESTOVA.)
 My dear wife's sister, don't you know;
 I told her all about you long ago.
 HLESTOVA (*sitting*): You once were quartered here—with those—
 the Grenadiers?
 SKALOZUB: You mean His Highness's own Regiment, it appears:
 The Nova Zemlya Musketeers.
 HLESTOVA: I'm rather slow! These names don't get inside my ears.
 SKALOZUB: There's always marks each regiment gets.
 Our uniforms have stripes and tabs and epaulettes.
 FAMUSOV (*to SKALOZUB*): You come with me, my boy! I've some-
 thing quaint to show,
 A curious kind of whist. Dear Prince, with us you go.
 (Takes SKALOZUB and PRINCE off.)
 HLESTOVA (*to SOPHYA*): Great Heavens! As sure as fate, my neck
 was in the noose.
 Your father uses half his wits:
 On some great hulking fighting man he hits;
 You can't say what you'd like: he'll come and introduce.
 MOLCHALIN (*handing her a card*): I've just made up your set.
 There's Monsieur Kock will play,
 Foma Fomich and I.

HLESTOVA: Good fellow! Show the way! (*Gets up.*)

MOLCHALIN: Your Spitz is such a pet: I've not seen one so tiny.
I stroked his fluffy coat: how soft it is and shiny!

HLESTOVA: Good fellow! That was kind!

(*She goes out, followed by MOLCHALIN and many others.*)

SCENE XIII

CHATSKY, SOPHYA and several others, who disperse during
course of the action

CHATSKY: With him, the skies soon brighten!

SOPHYA: Oh, must you needs go on?

CHATSKY: What is there there to frighten?
Because he found the wit, your angry guest to soften,
I thought I'd like to praise.

SOPHYA: It ends in spite too often.

CHATSKY: What, tell you what I thought? All right!

Old women are an angry lot.

To draw the lightning off, it's no bad thing we've got

An expert in the arts polite—

Molchalin! Who but he could bring them all to reason?

Here strokes the lap-dog just in season,

Gets up a timely rubber there;

'Tis he'll be Zagoretsky's heir!

You told me lately he had this and that good point,

But several you've forgotten—yes! (*Goes out.*)

SCENE XIV

SOPHYA, later MR. N.

SOPHYA (*to herself*): That man was born for my distress;

Each time with him, my temper's out of joint.

He loves to humble, wound—he's envious, proud, and spiteful.

MR. N. (*coming up*): You stand and ponder?

SOPHYA: On Chatsky.

MR. N.: Is he changed with all those years out yonder?

SOPHYA: He's not in his right mind.

MR. N.: He's lost his mind? How frightful!

SOPHYA (*after a pause*): I don't mean quite outright.

MR. N.: But serious signs you see?

SOPHYA (*looking fixedly at him*): It seems to me.

MR. N.: At his age can it be?
 SOPHYA: Well, there you are!
 (*Aside.*) He's ready to believe it!
 Now, Chatsky, as you like to take your jokes so far,
 Let's see how you yourself receive it. (*Goes out.*)

SCENE XV

MR. N., later MR. D.

MR. N.: He's lost his mind? Well, here's a go! She meant it!
 There's something in it, then—she couldn't well invent it?
 (*MR. D. comes in.*)
 MR. N.: You've heard it?
 MR. D.: What?
 MR. N.: Of Chatsky?
 MR. D.: What about?
 MR. N.: Gone mad, poor chap?
 MR. D.: Get out!
 MR. N.: It isn't me; it's what the others say.
 MR. D.: You're glad to spread it anyway.
 MR. N.: There must be some one knows: I'll go and find who said it.
 (*Goes out.*)

SCENE XVI

MR. D., later ZAGORETSKY

MR. D.: What fools will tell!
 He hears some nonsense and he's off to spread it!
 (*ZAGORETSKY comes in.*) You know about poor Chatsky?
 ZAGORETSKY: Well?
 MR. D.: Gone mad, poor chap!
 ZAGORETSKY: Oh yes, I know, I heard;
 Of course I know! The case was quite absurd.
 His uncle was a rogue and smuggled him away.
 He's in the madhouse now; they put him on a chain.
 MR. D.: Excuse me, he was here and in this room to-day.
 ZAGORETSKY: That means they've let him out again.
 MR. D.: Ah well! dear friend, with you the Press can say good-night;
 Then I'll be off, and spread my wings.
 But soft! I'll ask them all. One breathes these kind of things!
 (*Goes out.*)

SCENE XVII

ZAGORETSKY, *later* COUNTESS GRANDDAUGHTER

ZAGORETSKY (*to himself*): What Chatsky can this be? The name's familiar quite.

I seem to call to mind some Chatsky that I knew.

(*To COUNTESS GRANDDAUGHTER, who has come in.*) You've heard about him, too?

COUNTESS GRANDDAUGHTER: Who?

ZAGORETSKY: Why, Chatsky! He was here five minutes back.

COUNTESS GRANDDAUGHTER: I know.

I spoke with him.

ZAGORETSKY: You did; that's luck, he let you go:

He's lost his reason.

COUNTESS GRANDDAUGHTER: What?

ZAGORETSKY: I say, he's lost his mind.

COUNTESS GRANDDAUGHTER: No, really? That's exactly what I find.

I'm sure, between our views, there's not a bit to choose.

(*COUNTESS GRANDMOTHER comes in.*)

SCENE XVIII

The same and COUNTESS GRANDMOTHER

COUNTESS GRANDDAUGHTER: Ah! *grand'maman!* here's marvels!
Here's great news!

You haven't heard our trouble here?

Now isn't it delightful! Very nice!

COUNTESS GRANDMOTHER (*mumbles*): My dear, there's something in my ear;

Speak loud!

COUNTESS GRANDDAUGHTER: No time to tell you twice!

(*Turns to ZAGORETSKY.*) At her desire repeat the story!

I'll go and ask. (*Goes out.*)

SCENE XIX

ZAGORETSKY and COUNTESS GRANDMOTHER

COUNTESS GRANDMOTHER: What! What! The fire has reached this story?

ZAGORETSKY: Oh no! On Chatsky's score this outcry has arisen.

COUNTESS GRANDMOTHER: What! Chatsky was escorted out to prison?

ZAGORETSKY: Was clubbed in the Carpathians,
Went muzzy from the wound.

COUNTESS GRANDMOTHER: Has clubbed with the Freemasons *
And Mussulman Mahound?

ZAGORETSKY: You won't enlighten her. (*Goes out.*)

COUNTESS GRANDMOTHER: Anton Antonych! Stay!
They're wild with fright! He too has run away.
(PRINCE TUGOUKHOVSKY *comes in.*)

SCENE XX

COUNTESS GRANDMOTHER and PRINCE TUGOUKHOVSKY

COUNTESS GRANDMOTHER: Prince! Prince! Oh dear, this prince:
half dead, and at a ball!

Prince, have you heard?

PRINCE: Ah hm?

COUNTESS GRANDMOTHER: The man can't hear at all!
You saw Chief Constable? They say he's on the trail?

PRINCE: Eh? Hm?

COUNTESS GRANDMOTHER: It's Chatsky, Prince. They've dragged
him off to jail!

PRINCE: Ee hm?

COUNTESS GRANDMOTHER: It's dirk and knapsack there!
Off to the ranks! No joke! The traitor's changed his creed!

PRINCE: Oo hm?

COUNTESS GRANDMOTHER: Turned Mussulman; he has, indeed!
A damned disciple of Voltaire!
What? Well? Old man, you're deaf! Your trumpet you should bring!
Oh, deafness is a dreadful thing!
(*Others come in.*)

SCENE XXI

The same, HLESTOVA, SOPHYA, MOLCHALIN, PLATON MIKHAYLOVICH, NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA, COUNTESS GRANDDAUGHTER, PRINCESS and DAUGHTERS, ZAGORETSKY, SKALOZUB; later FAMUSOV and many others.

HLESTOVA: He's left his senses? Bless my heart!

Now come, that's sudden! Come, that's smart!
You, Sophy—have you heard?

* The Freemasons were influential in Russia during the late eighteenth and the early nineteenth centuries. Many of the Decembrist conspirators belonged to the society. In 1822 an edict of Alexander I was directed against the Masonic lodges. The society was prohibited in Russia by Nicholas I.—G. R. Noyes.

PLATON MIKHAYLOVICH: But who was first to spread it?

NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA: My dear, why all!

PLATON MIKHAYLOVICH: What all? Why, then
one's forced to credit;

For me, I have my doubts.

FAMUSOV (*coming in*): Of what? The Chatsky question?

What's there to doubt? 'Twas I that saw the first suggestion!

I've always wondered why he wasn't put away.

You talk of governments, and God knows what he'll say!

If any one bows low, until his shoulders hoop,

If even to royalty you stoop,

He'll call you slave and nincompoop!

HLESTOVA: He thinks he's wondrous witty!

At something that I said, the fellow laughed out loud.

MOLCHALIN: He told me I should leave the archives and the city.

COUNTESS GRANDDAUGHTER: He called me milliner: that ought to
make me proud.

NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA: My husband he advised to get away from
town.

ZAGORETSKY: The man is mad all round.

COUNTESS GRANDDAUGHTER: I saw it in his eyes.

FAMUSOV: He follows his mamma. Though now at peace she lies,
Eight times at least, poor dear, her mind broke down!

HLESTOVA: 'Tis strange indeed, the way that things turn out!

Skip from your senses at his years?

Must drink beyond his age.

PRINCESS: Oh! True!

COUNTESS GRANDDAUGHTER: Without a doubt.

HLESTOVA: He swigged champagne by bumpers, it appears.

NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA: By bottles—each a quart would hold!

ZAGORETSKY (*hotly*): No! Hundred-gallon casks, I'm told!

FAMUSOV: Well there! It's something to deplore,

That men go drinking out of season.

It's teaching is the plague, it's learning is the reason

That now, far worse than e'er before,

You see all round mad folks, mad acts, mad speculations.

HLESTOVA: They'll send you mad outright, the boarding-schools
alone,

The schools and colleges and—how is it they're known?—

Lancaster Mutual Improvement Associations.*

* These institutions, introduced from England, were very popular after the fall of Napoleon.

PRINCESS: In Petersburg they've got a college,
 I think it's called the School of Ped-a-gogic knowledge.
 There, sects and atheism is all their occupation.
 Professors teach! With them there studied our relation,
 And when he passed, went straight as foreman in a store!
 From ladies, even me, poor man, he runs in panic!
 He'll hear no word of ranks! A chemic, a botanic—

My nephew, please, Prince Theodore!

SKALOZUB: I've got good news for you: if all reports are true,
 They're going to reform schools, colleges, gymnasiums.*
 In future we shall teach in Russian style: One, Two!
 And books they'll only keep, well, just for great occasions.

FAMUSOV: Sergey Sergeich, no! From evil ways to turn them,
 You'll have to take all books and burn them.

ZAGORETSKY (*gently*): No! books aren't all alike. Now if the censor's
 science,

Between ourselves, were trusted to my hand,
 It's fables I'd attack. Oh, fables I can't stand!
 It's everlasting jokes at eagles and at lions!

Say what you will,

Although they're animals, they're sovereigns still.†

HLESTOVA: My friends, when some one's reason is affected,
 All one if books or drink has caused the worry;

For Chatsky I am sorry.

As Christians, nothing else, our pity is expected.

The man was full of wit; three hundred souls he had.‡

FAMUSOV: It's four.

HLESTOVA: It's three, dear sir.

FAMUSOV: Four hundred.

HLESTOVA: No, it's three!

FAMUSOV: The calendars all say—

HLESTOVA: All calendars are bad!

FAMUSOV: It's just four hundred! She's as captious as can be.

* In the last period of the reign of Alexander I (1815-1825) there was a growing reaction in the educational policy, which had been unusually liberal at the beginning of the reign. Magnitsky and Runich, entrusted with the inspection of the Universities of Kazan and St. Petersburg, introduced a régime of sheer repression, which was a mixture of monasticism and military discipline.

† The one great writer who, during the period of reaction, comparatively succeeded in guarding his independence from the censors, was Ivan Krylov, who in his fables of animal life really drew a picture of the officialdom of the time. He was a favorite both of Alexander I and Nicholas I.

‡ The value of a Russian estate was reckoned by the number of souls, that is, of registered male peasants.

HLESTOVA: It's three! You can't catch me, on who has how much land!

FAMUSOV: Four hundred, please to understand!

HLESTOVA: It's three! It's three! It's three!

(CHATSKY comes in.)

SCENE XXII

The same and CHATSKY

NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA: He's here!

COUNTLESS GRANDDAUGHTER: Hush!

ALL: Hush!

(*They withdraw to the opposite side of the stage from him.*)

HLESTOVA: See how his eyes he rolls!

He's fixing who to fight: he's itching for a row.

FAMUSOV (*apprehensively*): O Lord, have mercy on our sinful souls!

Dear boy, you're rather out of sorts just now;

You're tired and want a rest. Your pulse! You're quite upset!

CHATSKY: Yes, worried and worn out all round,

My chest from each new shove I get,

My legs with clicking heels, my ears with all this sound,

And most of all my head, from rubbish I'd forget.

(*Goes up to SOPHYA.*)

My spirit is oppressed with some strange misery,

And here, in all this crowd, I am lost. I don't feel right!

No! Moscow's disabused me quite.

HLESTOVA: It's Moscow's fault, you see.

FAMUSOV (*gesticulating to SOPHYA*): Look, Sophya! Keep away!

She doesn't see! What next?

SOPHYA (*to CHATSKY*): Do tell me why you seem so vexed.

CHATSKY: A trifling incident! Puffed up with pride,

A Frenchy from Bordeaux—in that next room I found him—

Had called a kind of council round him,

Relating what he felt when forth he hied

To Russia, to the bears, with fear and lamentations.

He came, and what d'you think? They're kind as kind can be.

No Russian word you'll hear, no Russian face you'll see:

As if you were at home, your friends and your relations,

Exactly like Bordeaux! Now look: so kind we are,

He's feeling here to-night he's quite a little tsar.

The ladies talk the same, the style of dress no other!

So pleased—but we aren't, brother!

He stops—on every side there rise
Such tender groans, such yearning sighs.

"Oh, France! Dear France! There's not a country like it!"
Say three young princesses: of course at once they strike it,
The old refrain that first the childish ear impresses.

Oh, where's a place with no princesses?

I breathed a pious supplication

Aside, though half aloud, that God

Would crush the unclean thing till from our souls he trod
This empty slavish cant of wholesale imitation:

If just a spark he'd throw in any man of spirit,

Whose words and deeds might sharply school,

Till we unlearned beneath such wholesome rule

Our sickening desire the strangers' tastes to inherit!

Declare me reprobate, old-fashioned fool,

But as for me, I find our North is ten times worse,

Since everything was changed for all that's its reverse,

Our manners and our tongue and all we once revered,

Our gracious flowing robes for something new and weird—

A veritable clown's costume,

A monkey's tail behind, a swelling bulge in front,

Against all common sense, to nature an affront,

The movements all constrained, the face without its bloom,

The chin absurd, clean-shaved, with bristles of gray hair,

Short coats, short locks, and wits still shorter than the hair.

Though born with the idea that every country's finer,

A little we might take from our good friends in China,

Of their most wise contempt for ways that aren't their own.

When shall the foreigner have ceased his endless sermons,

That even if by our speech alone,

Our good, our clever folk may tell us from the Germans?

"The European style! What is there sounds so well?

Our home-bred Russian—it's so queer.

Now, how could you translate *Madame, Mademoiselle?*"

"Sudarynya?" * "Oh, no!" they drawl into my ear.

Believe me, at the word, I see,

They all burst out and laugh at me.

"Sudarynya! Ha! Ha! Ha! What a jawful!

Sudarynya! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! How awful."

I cursed my life and cursed my pride,

I thought I'd tell them something true,

* "Sudarynya" is the old Russian for "madam," or "lady."

But every one had turned aside.
 Well, that's what happened to me—that's not new!
 Moscow and Petersburg, if all around we glance,
 Are like this person from Bordeaux in France.
 He opes his mouth—his luck he blesses,
 He wins the hearts of all princesses.
 In Petersburg and Moscow city,
 The man who's foe to fake, in face, in manners, speech,
 Whose hapless head—the more's the pity—
 Has half a dozen sound ideas in reach,
 If once he has the pluck to bring them all to book—
 Look!

(He looks round: all are waltzing with the greatest energy: the older folk are all seated at the card tables.)

ACT IV

The hall in FAMUSOV's house: a big staircase from the second floor joined by several side stairs from first floor: below on the right (of the actors) is the way out to the front steps; also porter's lodge: left, on the same floor, room of MOLCHALIN. Night, faint light. Footmen are moving about, others are asleep waiting for their masters.

SCENE I

COUNTESS GRANDMOTHER, COUNTESS GRANDDAUGHTER, *their* FOOTMAN

FOOTMAN (*in front*): The Countess Hryumin's, please!

COUNTESS GRANDDAUGHTER (*while they are wrapping her up*):

Entrancing,

Your ball—your Famusov! What guests the man invites!

You'll go to the other world to find such frights;

I never heard such talk! I never saw such dancing!

COUNTESS GRANDMOTHER: Come! Let's be going, girl: for bed, for bed I crave!

You'll drag me from the ballroom to my grave.

(They drive off.)

SCENE II

PLATON MIKHAYLOVICH and NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA

One footman attends to them; the other calls at the front door.

FOOTMAN: Send Captain Gorichev's!

NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA: My angel, my delight,
My precious darling love, you look so melancholy!
(*Kisses her husband on the forehead.*)

Confess, at Famusov's, the dance was very jolly.

PLATON MIKHAYLOVICH: Natasha, dear old girl, I'm half asleep at night.

These balls get badly on my nerves.

I don't object; a husband serves!

Up after twelve: to please my girl,

From time to time, however sadly,

I plunge, by order, in the whirl.

NATALYA DMITRIYEVNA: You want to make believe, and do it very badly;

You're deadly anxious they should take your age for double!

(*She goes off with the FOOTMAN.*)

PLATON MIKHAYLOVICH (*coolly*): A ball, why, that's all right: the slavery's the trouble,

And who enslaves a man to marriage?

Why! Don't they say that some are born by fate—?

FOOTMAN (*from the front steps*): There's mistress dreadful vexed at waiting in the carriage.

PLATON MIKHAYLOVICH (*with a sigh*): Yes! Coming straight!
(*They drive off.*)

SCENE III

CHATSKY and his FOOTMAN

CHATSKY (*coming in*): Call for my trap as quick as it can come!
(*FOOTMAN goes out.*)

Well, there! The day has had its joke;

And gone the shadows, fumes and smoke

Of all those tender hopes that made my heart their home.

What did I hope? What did I think to find?

These home-comings, how stale! Not one true friend in all!

Glad cries, embraces—how they pall!

While on your cart with listless mind

Over the endless plain still onward idly carried,

Before you, always undefined,

There's something bright and blue and varied.

An hour, two hours, all day, still on. A dash to spare,

And there's the stage and bed. And all around you blinking

That great smooth stretch of plain, so silent and so bare!—

Confound! It can't be borne; the more one goes on thinking—

(*The FOOTMAN comes back.*)

It's ready?

FOOTMAN: Sir, I've been; your coachman's not in sight.

CHATSKY: Be off and look! I can't stay here all night.

(*FOOTMAN goes out again.*)

SCENE IV

CHATSKY and REPETILOV

REPETILOV *runs in from the front steps; just at the entrance he falls right down and quickly gets up again.*

REPETILOV: Lord, there's a cropper! Kingdom come!
Let's look about me!— (*Sees CHATSKY.*) How did you get here, old chum?

My good old friend! My dear old friend! *Mon cher!*
I've heard a hundred times—they're so malicious—
That I'm a bore and ass, a fool and superstitious;
I've some foreboding here: I see some omen there!

Just now—explain it how you can—
I somehow knew as here I ran—
Smash, crash! Against the step I stumble,
And on the floor full length I tumble.
Yes, laugh! At my expense make jolly—
With Repetilov's japes, with Repetilov's-folly;
But I'm so drawn to you; a longing seems to strike me,
A love, a passion past control;

Now I'm prepared to stake my soul,
That not in all the world you'll find another like me,
Not one as true as me, believe me!
Suppose my wife and children leave me,
Suppose the world should pass me by,
Suppose that on this spot I die,
Yea, let the Lord God here destroy me—!

CHATSKY: Oh, stop it! You annoy me.

REPETILOV: Yes! You're not fond of me; and that cannot surprise me.

With others I may hope to pass;
With you, I feel that you despise me;
I'm wretched, I'm absurd, I'm such a dunce and ass!

CHATSKY: Well, there's a curious abasement!

REPETILOV: Yes, call me names! Myself I'd shrink in self-effacement,
To think of all those hours I've lost beyond recall!
I say! What time is it?

CHATSKY: It's time to go to bed,
So if you're coming to the ball,
You'd best go home instead.

REPETILOV: A ball, my friend! At balls the whole night long we brook
The yoke of convenience—our thoughts and feelings muzzle.

You never read it? There's a book—

CHATSKY: You reading? That's a puzzle!
You're Repetilov, then?

REPETILOV: Yes, tell me I'm a vandal!
I know I've made a dreadful scandal,
Kept company with fools and sinners,
Gone loafing every day to balls and dinners;
My wife I have deceived; my children I've neglected;
Lost all at cards; the court controls my property:
I kept a dancing girl, not one—I even collected
At one time three;

Sat up nine nights on end, and drank myself to death;
Abandoned everything—law, conscience, faith—

CHATSKY: Look here! Talk nonsense, but in moderation;
You're driving me to desperation.

REPETILOV: Congratulate me! Now I know such clever fellows—
They're 'geniuses! No more I drive about all night.

CHATSKY: For instance, now?

REPETILOV: What now? Oh, well, one night's all right,
And ask me where I've been!

CHATSKY: Why, that you needn't tell us!
The Club?

REPETILOV: The English Club! I'll tell you straight away,
I'm fresh from an uproarious sitting—
For goodness' sake don't say—I swore I wouldn't say.

We've a Society: we hold a secret meeting

Each Thursday. It's a very private league.*

CHATSKY: Ah, lad! I fear for your intrigue.

REPETILOV: What! In the Club?

CHATSKY: Why, yes! I fear some sudden measure
To kick you out of doors with all those schemes you treasure.

* The monologues of Repetilov contain sharp satire on Russian society of the time of Griboyedov, particularly on the "secret" anti-governmental associations. It is needless here to comment on the personal references, some of which are known, others doubtful.—G. R. Noyes.

REPETILOV: These apprehensions you can scout;
 We speak aloud, we shout—but none could make it out.
 Myself, when they debate of parliaments and juries,
 Of Byron, and for all our evils what the cure is,
 I often hold my tongue and listen and let pass:
 Lad, I'm not up to it; I feel I am an ass.
 Now you, *cher Alexandre*, you're just the man we need!
 Look here, old fellow! Here's a favor! Let me plead!
 You come along straight off, we just go down the street—

Now think what splendid men you'll meet!
 They're not a bit like me, but men of reputation,
 The cream, the intellect of our new generation.

CHATSKY: The Lord help them and you! Where to? You're off
 your head!

What! Out into the night? No, I'm for home and bed.

REPETILOV: Bosh! Nowadays who sleeps? Come on, and don't dispute;
 Make up your mind! We're all most resolute.
 A dozen heated brains! And yet you'll think you're hearing,
 When we begin to shout, a hundred voices cheering!

CHATSKY: But say, for this excitement, where's the call?

REPETILOV: We make a noise, my boy—

CHATSKY: You make a noise—that's all?

REPETILOV: It's not in place to tell, and now I've not the leisure;

High politics—affairs of state!

The time's not ripe for such a measure—

One has to wait:

We've got such men, *mon cher*: to spare a lengthy story—

I'll tell you first of all, there's Prince Grigóry,
 The funniest you saw; he makes us die of laughter!
 All day with Englishmen: it's them that he takes after;
 And like the English, through his teeth he speaks,
 And trimmed as close as theirs, his gentlemanly cheeks.
 You never met him? Oh, make friends with him!

And then old Growler, Evdokim,

You never heard him sing?

It's wonderful! Look here! The best I know—

He warbles that delightful thing:

"*Ah, non lasciar mi! No-no-no!*"

And then we have two brothers,

Levon and Borenka—there can't be two such others;

Of them I don't know what to say!

But if you bid me name a genius straight away,

There's Hippolyt Markelych Steifel!

The way the rogue can write—it's fine!

Perhaps you've come across a trifle?

My boy, you read him—yet he doesn't write a line!

Such men you ought to flog outright

And simply sentence them to write, and write, and write!

Yet if you want to, you can find in some review

His essays: "Something" and "A View."

On what is "Something"? Well, what not?

Our Know-all: he's the man for evil times we've got.

But ah! our chief of all; his like, can Russia show it?

No need to say his name: describe him, and you'll know it.

He'll rob your house, he'll call you out,

From penal servitude returned as bold as ever:

With dirty hands all round, no doubt,

But tell me where to find the man who's clean—and clever?

Yet when on honor's laws you hear our friend declaim,

As if a fiend inside were throbbing,

With bloodshot eyes, and face aflame,

He cries, and all the rest start sobbing.

There's men of mark for you! Their equals will you find?

I doubt it. Well, with them of course I fall behind.

I'm lazy, awfully, so I bring up the rear;

Yet sometimes even I can rise to an idea.

I'll sit—and ere an hour has run,

Myself, I don't know how, grind out some awful pun;

The others all take up my notion straight away,

And six of them at once, map out a little play;

Another six of them the music have invented;

The rest will sit and clap the day the play's presented.

Yes, laugh, my boy! You take your pick!

Accomplishments—the Lord gave nothing very striking:

He gave an honest heart—it's that that wins their liking;

They'll pass my fooleries—

FOOTMAN (*at the entrance*): The Colonel's carriage!

REPETILOV:

Whose?

(*SKALOZUB comes down the staircase.*)

SCENE V

The same and SKALOZUB

REPETILOV (*going to meet him*): Ah! Skalozub! The man I'd choose!

Stop! Don't be off! Can't do without you!

(*Crushes him in his embraces.*)

CHATSKY: Now what's my way to disappear? (*Goes into porter's lodge.*)

REPETILOV (*to SKALOZUB*): It's ages since we heard about you; They said that you were gone—your regiment nowhere near; You know friend Chatsky? (*Looks round.*) What? the villain's fled! No matter! My good luck! I've chanced on you instead. Now just you come with me, this moment, no refusing! Let's raid Prince Gregory's: I'm sure the house is crammed—

Some forty of the most amusing!

Such geniuses you'll meet; I'm damned!

They'll talk all night and never bore you!

Why first with dry champagne they'll fill you up to bursting,

And after that they'll lay such schemes before you

As you and I, my friend, I'm sure were never versed in!

SKALOZUB: Get out! Don't think that me you'll fuddle with your learning.

Call some one else! If that's your yearning,

For your Voltaire some sergeant true

I'll give Prince Gregory and you;

He'll make you all form fours correctly,

And when you scream, he'll stop your mouths directly.

REPETILOV: He's service on the brain! My boy, now you look here! I nearly rose to rank, but Fortune proved a wrecker—

I doubt if any one had luck so queer.

I'm on the civil side. That year

Von Klock was out to get the Exchequer,

So I

To marry Miss would try—

Head down, just take it as it comes!

So with his wife and him I plunged into reversi;*

To him and her such awful sums

I lost each night—the Lord have mercy!

Fontanka, Grand Canal! A palace he was raising

With colonnades, enormous—cost amazing!

Well! Somehow in the end the girl and I got married,

The dowry eighteen pence! my hopes of place miscarried!

Pa's German! He's no use!

Yes, he was frightened of abuse

For weakness to his kith and kin—

He feared, the cursed fool—but where do I come in?

His secretaries all were cads who'd sell their souls,

Outsiders, paltry writing fellows.

* A card game.

Now all have names to make one jealous!

The Blue Book all their feats enrolls!

Bah: service, orders, rank—they wear your heart away.

Ragmuffin, Alexey, with wondrous wit would say:

We need to take some steps, such steps as can't be stronger!

The stomach will not stand it longer!—

(*He stops, seeing that ZAGORETSKY has taken the place of SKALOZUB, who has driven off somewhere.*)

SCENE VI

REPETILOV and ZAGORETSKY

ZAGORETSKY: Oh, won't you please go on? I'll own to you sincerely, I'm just another such, an awful Liberal!

And just because I'm frank, and like to speak out clearly,

Lord, what I've suffered, all in all!

REPETILOV (*with annoyance*): They all clear out without a word! One's hardly gone—you've lost the second, then the third.

First, Chatsky—he decamped! Then Skalozub! I never!

ZAGORETSKY: Well, tell me what you think of Chatsky?

REPETILOV: Oh, he's clever!

We met by chance just now, and talked all kinds of tattle!

Most interesting! We discussed a vaudeville.

The vaudeville's the thing—and all the rest is nil!

We two—our tastes—we're just such kittle-cattle.

ZAGORETSKY: You surely soon began to find,

He's sadly damaged in his mind.

REPETILOV: What utter rubbish!

ZAGORETSKY: All are one in this conclusion.

REPETILOV: What nonsense!

ZAGORETSKY: Ask them all!

REPETILOV: Delusion!

ZAGORETSKY: Here comes the Prince your doubts to quash,

The Princess and Princesses!

REPETILOV: Bosh!

SCENE VII

The PRINCE and PRINCESS with their six daughters come in. A moment later HLESTOVA comes down the front staircase on the arm of MOLCHALIN. Footmen bustle about.

ZAGORETSKY: Princesses, if you please, perhaps you'll tell us what: Is Chatsky mad, or is he not?

FIRST PRINCESS: Why, is there any room to doubt it?

SECOND PRINCESS: I thought the whole world knew about it.

THIRD PRINCESS: The Hovorovs and the Dranskys,
Skachkovs, Pashkovs, Varlyanskys!

FOURTH PRINCESS: Oh, that's the stalest news! Did any one not know?

FIFTH PRINCESS: Who thinks it isn't true?

ZAGORETSKY: Why, *he* won't have it!

SIXTH PRINCESS: You?

ALL TOGETHER: M'sieu Repetilov, you? M'sieu Repetilov, oh!

How can you?— Why!— All think the same!—

What do you mean?— Absurd!— For shame!

REPETILOV (*stops his ears*): Beg pardon! Hadn't heard! It seems to be well known.

PRINCESS: Well known? It isn't safe to talk to him alone.

They should have locked him up long since.

To hear him talk, why his top floor

Is wiser than us all, than even my Prince!

I think he's just turned Jacobin, no more—

Your Chatsky!— Let's be off! Prince, you perhaps might go

With Zizi or Catiche! We'll take the brake for seven.

HLESTOVA (*from the staircase*): Princess! Your debt at whist, you know!

PRINCESS: I won't forget, my dear!

ALL (*to one another*): Good night!

(*The PRINCE and family drive off: also ZAGORETSKY.*)

SCENE VIII

REPETILOV, HLESTOVA, MOLCHALIN

REPETILOV: O Lord in heaven!

Anfisa Nilovna! Alas, poor Chatsky! There!

Where's your almighty mind—your hopes, your strivings, where?

Now say! How futile all the pains we fools are at!

HLESTOVA: Well, so God willed it! As to that,

They'll treat him—make a cure perhaps;

But you're incurable—they'll throw you with the scraps;

You turned up early, Master Rover!

(*To MOLCHALIN.*) Molchalin, there's your little hole;

(*Pointing to his door.*)

No need to see me out! Good night, Lord bless your soul!

(*MOLCHALIN goes off to his room.*)

(To REPETILOV.) Good-by, my friend: it's time that your wild days were over. (*She drives off.*)

SCENE IX

REPETILOV and his FOOTMAN

REPETILOV: Now where to go, and whom to meet?

It's getting on for break of day;

Come here, and put me on the seat!

Drive anywhere! Away!

(*He drives off: the last lamp goes out.*)

SCENE X

CHATSKY (*coming out of the porter's lodge*), later SOPHYA and FOOTMAN

CHATSKY: What's this? Can I believe my ears, or do I blunder?
This is no joke, 'tis downright malice. How I wonder—

By what strange magic can it be,

That all with one accord repeat this tale half-witted!

And some in open triumph, I can see—

And others speak as if they pitied.

If one could read one's neighbor's mind,

Is heart or tongue the most unkind?

Whose work this kind invention?

A set of fools believe; to other fools they mention;

The old women raise their hullabaloo—

Public opinion, there! that's you!

And that's my native land! No, on my present stay,

I see that very soon I'll wish myself away.

And Sophy, does she know? Of course, they've told her too.

I don't suppose she wished the laugh should turn on me—

Not more than others: true or false the tale may be:

All one to her, be it I or you!

There isn't any one she really loves the best!

But then this fainting and unconsciousness!

Spoilt nerves, a turn of whim, nor more nor less;

With them a trifle stirs, a trifle sets at rest;

I took it for a sign of feeling.— No, not that!

She'd faint away outright, I'm sure—so help me God!—

The same if anybody trod

Upon the tail of dog or cat.

SOPHYA (*on the staircase to the second floor, with a candle*):
Molchalin! You?

CHATSKY: 'Tis she! I see her plain!
My head is all on fire; my blood to the temples streaming.
She's there! It can't be she! Then am I only dreaming?
Or is there madness in my brain?
For something weird and strange could aught prepare me more?
But this is not a dream. This tryst was fixed before;
I only cheat myself, and where's the use to try?
Molchalin 'twas she called; and there's his room close by.

FOOTMAN: Your—

CHATSKY: Hush! (*Pushes him out.*)
I'll never blink an eye, and here I'll wait,
If on till morning. Once the cup is there,
Then better straight
Than waiting! No delay this bitterness can spare.
The door is opening.
(CHATSKY *hides behind a pillar. LIZA comes in with a candle.*)

SCENE XI

CHATSKY (*behind pillar*) and LIZA

LIZA: I can't, I shake all through.
The empty hall at night? I'm sure there's ghosts about!
There may be living people too!
Oh, how my mistress plagues me—serve her out!
And Chatsky—she abhors him so!
You see, she seems to think he's somewhere here below.
(*Looks round.*)
What, still! As if all night about the hall he'd wait!
Sure, ages since, he's past the gate.
Love? Till to-morrow that will keep!
He's home, and fast asleep.
Well, anyhow, I'm told at sweetheart's door to knock.
(*Knocks at MOLCHALIN's door.*)
Sir, please wake up, it's twelve o'clock!
There's missus calling you: she's waiting for you there!
Be quick! You've not much time to spare.
(MOLCHALIN *comes out of his room stretching himself and yawning*;
SOPHYA *steals down from above.*)

SCENE XII

CHATSKY (*behind pillar*), LIZA, MOLCHALIN, SOPHYALIZA (*to MOLCHALIN*): Sir, are you stone, or ice? For shame!

MOLCHALIN: Ah! Liza! For yourself you came?

LIZA: From mistress, sir.

MOLCHALIN: Now who'd have said it—

That in those cheeks, those veins, fair maid,

No kindling flush of love till now has played?

Are all your errands run to other people's credit?

LIZA: But you, who want to make a match,

Don't slack or lounge—or fear miscarriage!

To win your bride, no bite you'll snatch

And take no nap till marriage.

MOLCHALIN: What marriage? Who's the bride?

LIZA: Why, mistress!

MOLCHALIN: No, my pet!

I'm not in such despair as yet!

We'll get along without a wedding!

LIZA: Oh, sir! I wonder how you can!

Who else can be the happy man?

MOLCHALIN: Well, don't ask me!— Myself I'm every moment
dreading—

And in my very bones I feel it—

That Mr. Famusov some day

Will come and catch us straight away

And curse me, chase me out. Besides, I won't conceal it,

To praise your mistress so, I see no why or wherefore.

I hope that all her life most happy she'll remain.

'Twas Chatsky that she used to care for;

She jilted him—she'll jilt again.

My angel, I'd be glad indeed, that's true,

To feel for her the half of what I feel for you.

But no! Try hard as hard I will,

Be tender as I would, at sight my blood runs chill!

SOPHYA (*aside*): How despicable!CHATSKY (*behind the pillar*): What a hound!

LIZA: And don't you feel ashamed?

MOLCHALIN: Please every one all round—

That's first of all—my father gave me warning;

The master of the house in which I live,

The official chief—for he has posts to give—

His servant too, who cleans my boots each morning,
The porter at the gate—all trouble to allay,
Likewise the porter's dog, to see he doesn't bay.

LIZA: You've got your work cut out: that's all that I can say!

MOLCHALIN: So if I play the part of lover, that's my plan;
It's only meant to please the daughter of a man—

LIZA: Whom you for meat and drink must thank,

Who several times has got you raised in rank?

Let's go! Of talk like this, enough there's been!

MOLCHALIN: I go to share the love of my most dismal queen.
Oh, grant me one embrace to prove my ardor true!

(LIZA repulses him.)

Oh, why is she not you?

(Is going, but SOPHYA stops him.)

SOPHYA (almost in a whisper. The whole scene in subdued voice):
No further shall you go! Enough and more I've heard.

To think I had to hear, you wretch—or even this wall!

MOLCHALIN: What, Sophya Pavlovna!

SOPHYA: For God's sake, not a word!

Be silent! I'm prepared for all.

MOLCHALIN (falls on his knees; SOPHYA repulses him): Recall the
past! Oh, not those angry eyes!

SOPHYA: There's nothing I'll recall. Enough! Don't turn me sick!
Your memories, indeed! They cut me to the quick.

MOLCHALIN (crawling at her feet): Forgive! Forgive!

SOPHYA: Don't play the coward! Rise!

I ask for no reply; I knew it long ago.

You'll lie to me.

MOLCHALIN: Forgive! Have mercy!

SOPHYA: No! No! No!

MOLCHALIN: 'Twas all a joke, I said no word except, it's true—

SOPHYA: Be off, I say, this very minute!

I'll wake the house and all that's in it.

And ruin both myself and you. (MOLCHALIN gets up.)

From this day forth I scorn you and I flout you.

Reproach, complaint, or tears, don't dare

To think you'll get from me: for you I've none to spare.

Then see, from morning light I live my life without you—

That ne'er another word I ever hear about you!

MOLCHALIN: As you command.

SOPHYA: If not, to father then and there

I'll tell the worst in sheer vexation;

What happens to myself, you know, I do not care.

Now go!—but stay! 'Twas your salvation
 That in the dead of night, in all your talks with me,
 Your shyness let you dare still less to escape control
 Than even in open day, in company.
 You show less insolence than crookedness of soul.
 I'm glad it was by night with this I came acquainted;
 Thank Heaven that this reproach no watching eye can know,
 As 'twas that other time, that moment when I fainted;
 Then Chatsky too was there—

CHATSKY (*throwing himself between them*): He's here, pretender!

SOPHYA and LIZA:

Oh!

(LIZA drops the candle in fright: MOLCHALIN runs off to his room.)

SCENE XIII

CHATSKY, SOPHYA, LIZA

CHATSKY: Quick! Fall into a faint! Just now it's quite in season;
 That other time, be sure, there wasn't half the reason.

At last the riddle's solved, as clear as day;

And see for whom I am turned away!

God knows how I contained my rage! A fool? So be it.

I looked, and saw, and would not see it.

Meanwhile, the friend you hold more dear

Than ties of old or modesty or fear,

Sits fast behind his door, gives up without a struggle!

Oh, who can follow Fortune's juggle?

A tyrant and a scourge for men of worth—

Only Molchalins flourish on the earth.

SOPHYA (*all in tears*): Oh, don't go on! I blame myself all round;
 But who'd have ever thought the wretch could be so cunning!

LIZA: Oh! What a crash and noise! Why, all the house is running!

Your father! Look! He'll thank you, I'll be bound!

(FAMUSOV comes in with a crowd of servants, carrying candles.)

SCENE XIV

CHATSKY, SOPHYA, LIZA, FAMUSOV, *Servants*

FAMUSOV: Here, follow me; There's nought to fear.

More light! We want more lanterns here.

Where are your goblins? Bah! Known faces all too human;

My daughter Sophy, too! Abandoned woman

And shameless! Where? With whom? Exactly to the life
Like dear mamma, my late lamented wife.

My better half, if from her side I ran,
Was always somewhere with a man.

Have you no fear of God? What art was this he had?

Why, you yourself declared that he was mad.

No, no! Sheer silliness and blindness must have seized me;

It's all a simple plot—all aided and abetted,

The guests and he himself. Oh, why has Fate so teased me?

CHATSKY (to SOPHYA): For this idea, then, too, to you I am indebted?

FAMUSOV (to CHATSKY): No, sir! No shamming! Me you will not
fog!

Now, don't flare up—I know that dodge.

(To the PORTER.) You, Thomas—you're a simple log!

To what a lazy goose I've given my porter's lodge!

There's nothing that he knows: there's nothing he does right!

Where were you? What were you about?

Front door left open for the night!

Why weren't you listening? Why didn't you look out?

I'll send the lot to work upon the farms.

For twopence halfpenny you'd sell me!

(To LIZA.) You, sharp eyes, of your games there's nothing you could
tell me;

Oh yes! Kuznetsky Bridge, fine dresses, trinkets, charms!

Unite two loving hearts! 'Tis there you've learnt your trickings!

You wait! I'll see what you're about!

Off to your cottage! March! You'll go and feed the chickens!

(To SOPHYA.) And you, dear daughter too, don't think I'll leave you
out!

For just two days I'll beg you to have patience;

Then, Moscow's not for you, with friends and with relations!

Grabbers and pillagers, hands off!

Aunt! Country! Wilderness! Tambóv!*

And there with cheeks all pale and drawn

With knitting needles sit, with holy reading yawn!

(To CHATSKY.) To you, sir, plainly I would say,

High road or country road, you'll please not come this way;

And after this surprise you kindly treat us to,

I fancy every door will now be closed to you.

I'll do my best: I'll beat the tocsin near and far;

* The original has not "Tambóv," but "Sarátov" which, if it kept its place in the line, would present difficulties of rhyming. The next province, Tambóv, is credited with a special reputation for dullness.

I mean with my complaint all round the town to go;

I mean to let the people know,
Appeal to Senate, Ministers, and Tsar.

CHATSKY (*after a short silence*): Excuse me! That's all lost on me!
I cannot understand a word!

As if there's something that they want to make me see,

And more that's yet to come. It all seems so absurd!

(*Hotly.*) Blind fool! Where did I hope to rest my travels out?

Flew, in a tremble, on—thought happiness so near!

With whom, not long ago, so humble and devout,

Poured tender phrases in her ear?

(*To SOPHYA.*) And you: O Heavens, that there your choice should fall!

Oh, if I stop to think, who was it you preferred,

Why did you draw me on to hope at all?

Why did you never say a word?—

That, but to laugh at, for the past 'twas naught you cared,

That even your memory kept no trace

Of all we felt, of all the likings that we shared,

Which no amusements and no change of place,

However far away, could dim—nor I forget you!

They were my breath of life, were with me ever-present!

If straight away you'd said, my coming here upset you,

The sight of me, my words and actions—all unpleasant—

Why, I'd have broken off without even thinking twice,

And ere I left you, said good-by forever;

I would have made no great endeavor

To know who was it that you found so nice!

Oh, no! (*Mockingly.*) You'll make it up on ripe consideration.

What! Break your heart! Much good 'twill do:

Just think! How nice to know that he depends on you!

You'll keep him, wrap him up, and find him occupation—

Boy husband! Servant spouse! The footman of your wife!

The Moscow husband knows no higher aim in life!

Enough! I'm proud to think with you I've done!

(*To FAMUSOV*): And you, good sir, papa, who worship decorations,

A happy ignorant, I'll leave you drowsing on.

Don't fear I threaten you with my solicitations!

You'll find another, quite a catch,

Who'll make his way and scrape and court,

A perfect paragon, in short,

For dear papa-in-law a match!

So! My delirium is past!

I have cast my dreams away; the veil is down at last!

'Twere no bad thing, now, once for all
 On father and on daughter
 And on the ass whose graces caught her,
 To vent on all of you my bitterness and gall!
 Whom have I been with? What has brought me to this town?
 All curse and drive me out—a mob that hounds you down,
 Of friends in friendship false, unflagging in their hatred,
 Tale-mongers not to be placated:
 The silly would-be wit, the crooked simpleton,
 Old maids, malicious every one,
 And old men babbling out some folly or some fad—
 No wonder all the gang proclaimed that I was mad.
 You're very right! That man could pass through fire unscathed,
 Who had spent a livelong day with you
 And in the selfsame air had bathed
 And yet had kept his reason too.
 I'll out of Moscow straight! I'll journey here no more!
 I'll fly and not look back! Where no ill tongues disparage,
 I'll seek me out a nook for heart that's tried too sore!
 My carriage here! My carriage! (*He goes out quickly.*)

SCENE XV

The same, without CHATSKY

FAMUSOV (*stands a long time stupefied*): Well, there! Then don't
 you see, he's really off his head?
 Now tell me, do!
 The madman! Think of all the silly things he said!
 Me servile! Father-in-law! So down on Moscow too!
 (*To SOPHYA.*) But you, you mean to wear my life away!
 Could any lot than mine be more contrary?
 Oh dear! Oh dear! whatever will they say?
 I think I hear the Princess Mary!

THE INSPECTOR

A Comedy in Five Acts

By NIKOLAY VASILYEVICH GOGOL

(1836)

*Translated by John Laurence Seymour
and George Rapall Noyes*

Don't blame the looking-glass if your
mug is crooked. POPULAR PROVERB

CHARACTERS *

- ANTÓN ANTÓNOVICH SKVÓZNIK-DMUKHANÓVSKY, *chief of police*
 ANNA ANDRÉYEVNA, *his wife*
 MÁRYA ANTÓNOVNA, *his daughter*
 LUKÁ LÚKICH HLÓPOV, *superintendent of schools*
 HIS WIFE
 AMMÓS FÉDOROVICH LYÁPKIN-TYÁPKIN, *judge*
 ARTÉMY FILÍPPOVICH ZEMLYANÍKA, *supervisor of charitable institutions*
 IVÁN KÚZMICH SHPÉKIN, *postmaster*
 PETR IVÁNOVICH DÓBCHINSKY } *landed proprietors living in the town*
 PETR IVÁNOVICH BÓBCHINSKY }
 IVÁN ALEXÁNDROVICH HLESTAKÓV, *an official from St. Petersburg*
 OSIP, *his servant*
 CHRISTIÁN IVÁNOVICH GÍBNER, *district physician*
 FÉDOR ANDRÉYEVICH LYULYUKÓV } *retired officials, respected persons*
 IVÁN LAZARÉVICH RASTAKÓVSKY } *ages in the town*
 STEPÁN IVÁNOVICH KORÓBKIN }
 STEPÁN ILYÍCH UKHOVÉRTOV, *police captain*
 SVISTUNÓV }
 PÚGOVITSYN } *policemen*
 DERZHÍMORDA }
 ABDÚLIN, *a merchant*
 FEVRÓNYA PETRÓVA POSHLÉPKIN, *wife of a locksmith*
 WIDOW of a SERGEANT
 MÍSHKA, *servant of the chief of police*
 INN SERVANT
Men and women guests, merchants, townsfolk, petitioners.

* Several of these names have grotesque associations; the following translations may serve: Skvoznik-Dmukhanovsky, Rascal-Puftup; Hlopov, Bedbug; Lyapkin-Tyapkin, Bungle-Steal; Zemlyanika, Strawberry; Hlestakov, Whipper-snapper; Lyulyukov, Halloo; Rastakovsky, Sayyes; Korobkin, Woodenhead; Ukhovertov, Earwig; Svistunov, Whistle; Pugovitsyn, Buttons; Derzhimorda, Holdyourmug; Abdulin, Tatar; Poshlepkin (pronounced Po-shlyop'kin), Drag-gletail. Fedor is pronounced Fyǒ'dor; Fedorovich, Fyǒ'do-ro-vich; Shpekin, Shpyǒ'kin; Ukhovterov, U-kho-vyǒr'toff; Petr, Pyǒtr (one syllable).

CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

NOTES FOR THE ACTORS

The CHIEF OF POLICE* has grown old in the service and is, in his own way, anything but a stupid man. Although a bribe-taker, he behaves with marked dignity; he is rather serious, and is even somewhat inclined to moralize; he speaks neither loudly nor softly, much nor little. His every word is significant. His features are harsh and coarse, such as are common in people who have advanced with difficulty from the lowest ranks. The change from fear to joy, from servility to arrogance, is very sudden, as in the case of a man with crudely developed personal traits. He is dressed in the usual manner, in his uniform with frogs, wearing high boots with spurs. His hair is cut short and shows gray streaks.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA, his wife, is a provincial coquette, still in middle life, brought up half on novels and albums, half on bustling about her housekeeping supplies and supervising her maids. She is very inquisitive, and on occasion displays vanity. Sometimes she gets the upper hand of her husband simply because he is unable to answer her, but this power extends only to trifles and consists of curtain lectures and nagging. During the course of the play she changes her costume four times.

HLESTAKOV is a young man twenty-three years old, very thin and lean; he is rather stupid, and, as they say, rattle-headed, one of those people who in their offices are called hopelessly "dumb." He speaks and acts without any reflection. He is incapable of focusing his attention on any thought whatsoever. His speech is abrupt, and the words fly out of his mouth quite unexpectedly. The more sincerity and simplicity the actor puts into this rôle, the better he will play it. He is dressed fashionably.

OSIP is the usual sort of elderly manservant. He talks seriously, and has a rather condescending air; he is inclined to moralize, and likes to sermonize his master behind his back. His voice is almost unchang-

*The office of *gorodnichy*, or chief of city police, existed from 1775 to 1862. The *gorodnichy* was appointed by the imperial authorities in St. Petersburg and was responsible to them. His duties were far more extensive than those of the chief of police of an American or an English city. The title *city manager* might suggest them more accurately.

ing: in conversation with his master he assumes a severe, abrupt, and even rather rude expression. He is cleverer than his master, and therefore grasps a situation more quickly; but he does not like to talk much, and is a silent rascal. He wears a gray or blue frock coat, much worn.

BOBCHINSKY and DOBCHINSKY are both short and stubby and very inquisitive, extraordinarily like each other: both are slightly corpulent; both speak very fast with an extraordinary amount of gesticulation. Dobchinsky is a little taller and more serious than Bobchinsky, but Bobchinsky is more expansive and lively than Dobchinsky.

LYAPKIN-TYAPKIN, the Judge, is a man who has read five or six books, and is consequently something of a freethinker. He is very fond of conjectures, and therefore gives much weight to his every word. The actor who plays the rôle must always preserve a knowing expression of countenance. He speaks in a bass voice with a prolonged drawl, with a sound of wheezing and strangling, like an old clock, which first squeaks and then strikes.

ZEMLYANIKA, the Supervisor of Charitable Institutions, is a very stout, awkward, and clumsy man, but for all that a schemer and a rogue. He is very officious and bustling.

THE POSTMASTER is simple-hearted to the point of naïveté.

The remaining rôles require no special explanations: their prototypes may be found in almost any community.

The actors should pay particular attention to the last scene. The last speech should produce upon all a sudden electric shock. The whole group should strike its pose in a twinkling. A cry of astonishment should be uttered by all the women at once, as if proceeding from a single bosom. From a disregard of these remarks may result a total loss of effect.

THE INSPECTOR

ACT I

A room in the house of the CHIEF OF POLICE

SCENE I

CHIEF OF POLICE, SUPERVISOR OF CHARITABLE INSTITUTIONS,
SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS, JUDGE, POLICE CAPTAIN,
DISTRICT PHYSICIAN, and two SERGEANTS OF POLICE

CHIEF OF POLICE: I have invited you here, gentlemen, in order to communicate to you a most unpleasant piece of news: a government inspector is coming to visit us.

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: What, an inspector?

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: What, an inspector?

CHIEF OF POLICE: An inspector from Petersburg, incognito. And furthermore, with secret instructions.

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: Well, I declare!

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: As if we didn't have troubles enough already!

LUKA LUKICH: Oh, my God, and with secret instructions too!

CHIEF OF POLICE: I had a sort of presentiment. All last night I kept dreaming about two most extraordinary rats. Honest, I've never seen any like them: black, and awfully big. They came, sniffled about, and went away again. And now I'm going to read you a letter that I've received from Andrey Ivanovich Chmykhov, whom you know, Artemy Filippovich. Here's what he writes: "My dear friend, god-father, and benefactor," (*He mutters in an undertone, rapidly glancing over the letter.*) . . . "and to inform you." Ah, here it is! "I hasten to inform you, by the way, that an official has arrived with instructions to inspect the whole province and especially our district. (*Raising his fingers significantly.*) I have found this out from most reliable people, although he is representing himself as a private individual. Knowing as I do that you, like everybody else, are liable to your little failings, because you're a smart chap and don't like to miss anything that fairly swims into your hands . . ." (*After a pause.*) Well, this is a friendly party. . . . "I advise you to take precautions, because he may arrive at any moment, if he hasn't already, and isn't living somewhere

around now, incognito. . . . Yesterday I . . ." Well, next there's some family matters: "Cousin Anna Kirilovna has come to see us with her husband; Ivan Kirilovich has grown very stout, and he plays on the fiddle all the time . . ." and so forth, and so on. Now there's a fix for you!

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: Yes, and such an unusual fix; absolutely extraordinary! There's something up.

LUKA LUKICH: But why on earth, Anton Antonovich; what's this for? Why send an inspector here?

CHIEF OF POLICE: What for? Evidently it's fate. (*Sighing.*) Up to this time, thanks be to God, they've poked into other people's business; but now it's our turn.

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: I think, Anton Antonovich, that in this case it's for a subtle and more political reason. Here's what it means: Russia . . . yes . . . Russia's going to war; and the ministry, you see, has sent the official to find out if there's any treason brewing.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Where do you get that stuff? Aren't you the smart man! Treason in a provincial town! Is this a frontier town? Why, you can gallop away from here for three years without reaching a foreign country.

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: No, I tell you, you don't understand . . . you don't . . . The authorities have subtle ideas: even if it is a long distance, they aren't taking any chances.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Whether they are or not, gentlemen, I've warned you. See here: I've made, for my part, some kind of arrangements, and I advise you to do the same. Especially you, Artemy Filippovich! No doubt the passing official will want first of all to inspect the charitable institutions belonging to your department, and therefore you'd better see that everything's in decent shape: the nightcaps had better be clean, and the patients had better not look like blacksmiths, as they usually do, in their little home circle.

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: Come, that's all right. They can put on clean nightcaps if you want.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Yes. And also above each bed write up in Latin or some such language—here, that's your job, Christian Ivanovich—the name of each disease, when the person was taken ill, and the day of the week and month. . . . And it's a bad thing that your patients smoke such strong tobacco that a fellow always begins to sneeze as soon as he goes in. Yes, and it would be better if there were fewer of 'em: people will attribute it right off to bad supervision or to the doctor's lack of skill.

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: Oh, so far as the doctoring goes, Christian Ivanovich and I have taken our measures: the closer you get to nature,

the better; we don't use expensive medicines. Man's a simple creature: if he's going to die, he dies; if he's going to get well, he gets well. And besides it would be hard for Christian Ivanovich to consult with them: he doesn't know a word of Russian.

(CHRISTIAN IVANOVICH utters a sound somewhat like the letter "e" and a little like "a.")

CHIEF OF POLICE: I'd also advise you, Ammos Fedorovich, to pay some attention to the courthouse. There in the hall where the petitioners usually appear, the janitors have started raising domestic geese and goslings, and they all duck under your feet as you walk. Of course it's praiseworthy for every man to look after his domestic enterprises, and why shouldn't a janitor? Only in such a place, you know, it's hardly suitable. . . . I meant to bring that to your attention before, but somehow I forgot it.

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: Well, I'll order them all taken away to my kitchen this very day. Come to dinner if you want to.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Besides that it's a bad thing that you have all kinds of rubbish drying up right in the court room, and a hunter's whip right over the cupboard where the documents are kept. I know that you like hunting, but all the same you'd better remove it for a while; and then, when the government inspector has gone away, you can hang it up there again. And your assessor likewise . . . of course, he's a well-informed man, but he smells exactly as if he'd just come out of a distillery—and that's no good either. I've been going to speak to you about that for some time back; but I was distracted, I don't remember how. There's a remedy against that smell, if, as he says, it's actually natural to him: he can be advised to eat onions or garlic or something else. In that case Christian Ivanovich might help out with some drugs.

(CHRISTIAN IVANOVICH utters the same sound.)

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: No, it's impossible to drive it out. He says that in his childhood his nurse bumped him and that since that time he smells a little of vodka.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Well, I only brought it to your notice. So far as internal arrangements go and what Andrey Ivanovich calls in his letter little failings, I can't say anything, and it would be queer to talk about them, for there's no man who hasn't some weaknesses or other. Why, God himself has fixed it like that, and the Voltairians make a great mistake to say anything to the contrary.

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: And what do you presume to call failings, Anton Antonovich? There are sins and sins. I tell everybody openly that I take bribes—but what kind of bribes? Wolfhound puppies. That's absolutely another matter.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Well, puppies or anything else—it's bribes, all the same.

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: Indeed not, Anton Antonovich. Here, for instance, if a man accepts a fur coat worth five hundred rubles, or a shawl for his wife . . .

CHIEF OF POLICE: Well, and what if you do accept only wolfhound puppies as bribes? To make up for it, you don't believe in God; you never go to church; but I am at least firm in the faith, and I go to church every Sunday. But you . . . Oh, I know you: if you begin to talk about the creation of the world, my hair simply stands on end.

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: But you see I reasoned it out for myself, with my own intellect.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Well, in some cases it's worse to have too much intellect than to have none at all. However, I merely wanted to mention the district court; but to tell the truth, I doubt that any one will ever take a peep at it; it's such an enviable place, God Himself must protect it. Now, as for you, Luka Lukich, as supervisor of educational institutions, you'd better take special care of the teachers. Of course they're learned people, educated in various colleges; but they have very strange ways, naturally inseparable from their learned calling. One of them, for instance, the one with the fat face . . . I don't remember his name . . . when he gets on the platform can't do without making faces, like this (*making a grimace*) and then begins to iron out his beard with his hand, from under his cravat. Of course, when he pulls a snout like that at one of the pupils, it doesn't matter much, and it may even be necessary for all I can say; but judge for yourself if he should do it to a visitor—that would be awful: the government inspector or whoever it was might consider it personal, and the devil knows what might come of it.

LUKA LUKICH: Surely, but what can I do with him? I've spoken to him about it several times already. Here, just a few days ago, when our marshal of nobility happened to drop in on the class, he cut such a mug as I've never seen before. Of course he did it with the best heart in the world, but I got called down: "Why," says they, "are our young people being exposed to the contagion of freethinking?"

CHIEF OF POLICE: I ought also to mention your history teacher. His head's full of learning, that's evident, and he's picked up information by the ton; only he gets so hot in his explanations that there's no understanding him. I once listened to him: well, while he was talking about the Assyrians and the Babylonians, it was all right; but when he got as far as Alexander of Macedon I can't tell you what came over him. Damme if I didn't think there was a fire! He ran down from the platform, and banged a chair against the door with all his might.

Of course, Alexander of Macedon was a hero; but why smash the chairs over him? It causes a loss to the treasury.

LUKA LUKICH: Yes, he's hot-headed. I've remarked the fact to him several times already. . . . He says, "Just as you please: for science I won't spare life itself."

CHIEF OF POLICE: Yes, such is the inexplicable law of the Fates: a wise man is either a drunkard or he makes such faces that you've got to carry out the holy ikons.*

LUKA LUKICH: God save us from serving in the educational line! A fellow's afraid of everybody: all sorts of people interfere, and they all want to show that they're educated, too.

CHIEF OF POLICE: But all this wouldn't amount to anything—it's that damned incognito! He'll look in all of a sudden with an "Oh, here you are, sweethearts! And who's the judge here?" he'll say.—"Lyapkin-Tyapkin."—"All right, hand over Lyapkin-Tyapkin! And who's the supervisor of charitable institutions?"—"Zemlyanika."—"Well, hand over Zemlyanika!"—That's what's bad!

SCENE II

The same and the POSTMASTER

POSTMASTER: Will you explain, gentlemen, what sort of official is coming, and why?

CHIEF OF POLICE: But haven't you heard?

POSTMASTER: I heard something from Petr Ivanovich Bobchinsky. He just called on me at the post office.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Well, then, what do you think about it?

POSTMASTER: What do I think? I think we're going to war with the Turks.

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: Right-o! That's exactly what I thought.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Yes, but you're both talking through your hat!

POSTMASTER: Sure, it's war with the Turks. The French keep spoiling everything.

CHIEF OF POLICE: War with the Turks, your grandmother! *We're* going to be in a mess, not the Turks. We know that already; I have a letter.

POSTMASTER: If that's so, then there's not going to be war with the Turks.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Well, then, how about you, Ivan Kuzmich?

POSTMASTER: About me? How about you, Anton Antonovich?

CHIEF OF POLICE: Well, what about me? I'm not afraid; that is,

*"To avoid shocking them."—Sykes.

only a little. . . . The merchants and the townspeople make me uneasy. They say that I'm somewhat hard-boiled; but if I've ever taken anything from anybody, God knows it was without the least ill-feeling. I even think (*taking him by the arm and leading him aside*), I even think there may have been some private denunciation of me. Otherwise why in the world send the inspector to us? Now listen here, Ivan Kuzmich, hadn't you better, for our mutual benefit just unseal and read every letter that arrives at the post office, both incoming and outgoing? You know, just in case there should be some sort of denunciation, or simply, correspondence. If there isn't, of course you can seal them up again; or, so far as that goes, you can even deliver them opened.

POSTMASTER: I know, I know. . . . Don't try to teach me. I do it already, not as a precaution, but more out of curiosity; I'm deadly fond of finding out what's new in the world. I tell you, it's most interesting reading. There are piles of letters that you'll thoroughly enjoy, certain passages are so descriptive . . . and they're so instructive . . . lots better than the *Moscow News*.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Well, tell me, haven't you ever come across anything about some such official from Petersburg?

POSTMASTER: No, absolutely nothing about any one from Petersburg, but there's a lot said about those from Kostroma and Saratov. However, it's a pity that *you* don't read the letters: there are some corking places in them. Not long ago a lieutenant was writing to a friend and he described a ball in the most playful way . . . it was awfully good: "My life, my dear friend, is being passed in the empyrean," he says; "there are lots of young ladies; the band is playing; the standard gallops by. . . ." He described it all with very great feeling. I kept the letter out just on purpose. Do you want me to read it to you?

CHIEF OF POLICE: Well, this is hardly the time for it. So you'll do me the favor, Ivan Kuzmich, if you accidentally come across a complaint or a denunciation, to keep it back without any question.

POSTMASTER: With the greatest of pleasure.

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: Look out, or you'll catch it for that, sometime!

POSTMASTER: Great Scott!

CHIEF OF POLICE: Never mind, never mind. It would be another story if you were to make anything public out of it; but you see, this is a family matter.

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: Yes, a nasty mess has been brewed! I admit I was going to call on you, Anton Antonovich, to make you a present of a little bitch. She's a sister to the dog you know. You've doubtless heard that Cheptovich and Varkhovinsky have started a lawsuit, so that now I'm living in luxury: I course hares now on one man's land, now on the other's.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Holy Saints, I don't care anything about your hares now! I can't get that damned incognito out of my head. You wait until the door opens, and then suddenly—

SCENE III

The same, with DOBCHINSKY and BOBCHINSKY, who both come in panting

BOBCHINSKY: An extraordinary event!

DOBCHINSKY: What unexpected news!

ALL: Why, what is it?

DOBCHINSKY: A most unforeseen affair. We went into the inn—

BOBCHINSKY (*interrupting*): Petr Ivanovich and I went into the inn—

DOBCHINSKY (*interrupting*): Hey, if you please, Petr Ivanovich, I'll tell it!

BOBCHINSKY: Hey yourself, let me . . . let me, let me . . . you haven't got the right style. . . .

DOBCHINSKY: But you'll get all balled up and won't remember everything.

BOBCHINSKY: I'll remember, by George, I'll remember! Only don't mix in, let me tell it; don't meddle! Gentlemen, please tell Petr Ivanovich not to interfere!

CHIEF OF POLICE: Yes, for God's sake, tell us what's up! My heart's in my mouth. Be seated, gentlemen; take chairs! Petr Ivanovich, here's a chair for you. (*All seat themselves around the two PETR IVANOVICHES.*) Well now, what's up?

BOBCHINSKY: Allow me, allow me; I'll tell everything in order. No sooner had I had the pleasure of leaving you after you had got all upset over the receipt of that letter—yes, sir—than I just dropped in . . . now, please don't interrupt, Petr Ivanovich! I already know all, all, all about it, sir! So, as you'll be kind enough to see, I dropped in on Korobkin. But not finding Korobkin at home, I turned in at Rastakovsky's; and not finding Rastakovsky, I went straight to Ivan Kuzmich in order to communicate to him the news you had received; and then, going away from there, I met Petr Ivanovich—

DOBCHINSKY (*interrupting*): Near the stall where they sell meat pies.

BOBCHINSKY: Near the stall where they sell meat pies. Yes, I met up with Petr Ivanovich; and I said to him, "Have you heard the news that Anton Antonovich has received in a trustworthy letter?" But Petr Ivanovich had already heard about it from your housekeeper, Avdotya, who had been sent, I don't know what for, to Filipp Antonovich Prchechuyev's.

DOBCHINSKY (*interrupting*): For a little keg for French brandy.

BOBCHINSKY (*pushing his hands aside*): For a little keg for French brandy. So Petr Ivanovich and I went to Pochechuyev's. . . . For heaven's sake, Petr Ivanovich, don't interrupt; please don't interrupt! . . . We went to Pochechuyev's, and on the way Petr Ivanovich said to me: "Let's stop," he says, "at the inn. I haven't had anything in my stomach since morning, and it's simply flopping about. . . ." Yes, sir, Petr Ivanovich's belly was. . . . "But they've just brought some fresh salmon into the inn," he says, "and we'll take a snack." Well, no sooner were we in the hotel, when suddenly a young man—

DOBCHINSKY (*interrupting*): Not bad-looking, in civilian clothes. . . .

BOBCHINSKY: Not bad-looking, in civilian clothes, was walking up and down the room with such a thoughtful expression on his face and in his actions, and here (*putting his hand over his forehead*) much of everything, very much. I had a sort of presentiment, and I says to Petr Ivanovich: "There's more in this than meets the eye." Yes, I did. But Petr Ivanovich beckoned to me with his finger and we called the innkeeper, sir, the innkeeper Vlas. His wife was confined three weeks ago; and such a smart boy, too, he's going to take care of the inn just like his daddy. Well, having called Vlas, Petr Ivanovich asked him on the quiet: "Who's that young man?" he says. And Vlas answered, "Why that . . ." Hey, don't interrupt, Petr Ivanovich; please don't interrupt; you won't be able to tell it, God knows you won't: you lisp. I know you've got a tooth in your head that whistles. . . . "That young man," he says, "is an official." Yes, sir. "He's come from Petersburg," says Vlas, "and his name is Ivan Alexandrovich Hlestakov, sir; and he's going," says Vlas, "into the Province of Saratov; and," he says, "he's certainly acting queer: this is the second week he's been here, he never goes outside of the tavern; he orders everything on account; and he won't pay a kopek." As soon as he had told me that, I saw through it at once. "Aha!" I said to Petr Ivanovich—

DOBCHINSKY: No, Petr Ivanovich, it was I who said "Aha!"

BOBCHINSKY: You said it first, but I said it next. "Aha!" said Petr Ivanovich and I. "But why has he come here if he's headed for the Province of Saratov?"—Yes, sir. And so he must be that official.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Who? What official?

BOBCHINSKY: Why, that there official that you received the notice about, the government inspector.

CHIEF OF POLICE (*frightened*): What the deuce are you saying? That can't be he!

DOBCHINSKY: Yes, it is! He doesn't pay and he doesn't go. How

could it be anybody else? And his traveling papers are made out for Saratov.

BOBCHINSKY: It's he; it's he, by God, it's he. . . . And what an observing fellow: he inspected everything. He even noticed that Petr Ivanovich and I were eating salmon, chiefly because Petr Ivanovich, on account of his stomach . . . well, yes, he even took a look in our plates. I fairly shivered with fright.

CHIEF OF POLICE: O Lord, forgive us sinners! Where's he staying?

BOBCHINSKY: In number five, under the staircase.

BOBCHINSKY: In the very same room where those traveling officers had a fight last year.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Has he been here long?

BOBCHINSKY: Just two weeks. He came on the day of St. Vasily of Egypt.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Two weeks! (*Aside.*) Holy Saints and Martyrs, get us out of this! In these two weeks the sergeant's wife has been beaten up! No provisions have been issued to the prisoners! The streets are like a dramshop, such filth! Oh, shame! Disgrace! (*He clutches at his head.*)

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: What do you think, Anton Antonovich: shall we go in a body to the hotel?

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: No, no! Let the Chief of Police go first, then the clergy, and the merchants—isn't that the way it is in the book, *The Deeds of John the Mason*? *

CHIEF OF POLICE: No, no, please leave it to me. Difficult situations have occurred in my life, but they have turned out all right, and I have even been thanked. Maybe God will get us off this time. (*Turning to BOBCHINSKY.*) You say he's a young man?

BOBCHINSKY: He is; not much over twenty-three or four.

CHIEF OF POLICE: All the better: you can smell out a young one quicker. It's fierce when it's an old devil; but a young one is all on the surface. Get your own business fixed up, gentlemen; but I'll go by myself, or maybe with Petr Ivanovich here, privately, just for a walk, to inquire whether the transient strangers are suffering any annoyances. Hey, Svistunov!

SVISTUNOV: What, sir?

CHIEF OF POLICE: Go call the police captain right away—but no, I need you. Tell some one outside to go for him as quickly as possible, and then come back here. (*The SERGEANT OF POLICE runs out at full speed.*)

* The Freemasons were prohibited in Russia as a society dangerous to the government. Apparently the freethinking judge refers to a masonic book. (Adapted from Sykes.)

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: Let's go, let's go, Ammos Fedorovich! There may be some trouble, for a fact.

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: Aw, what are you afraid of? Put clean nightcaps on the patients, and cover up your tracks.

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: To hell with your nightcaps! I ordered oatmeal porridge served to the patients, but all the same the corridors stink so of cabbage that you have to hold your nose!

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: Well, I'm easy for my part. As a matter of fact, whoever 'll look into a district court? But if he does happen to glance at any paper, he'll lose all joy in life. Here I've been sitting on the judge's bench for fifteen years, and if I merely look at a report, all I can do is wave my hand! Solomon himself couldn't make out what's truth in it and what isn't.

(*The JUDGE, the SUPERVISOR OF CHARITABLE INSTITUTIONS, the SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS, and the POSTMASTER go out, and at the door encounter the returning SERGEANT OF POLICE.*)

SCENE IV

CHIEF OF POLICE, BOBCHINSKY, DOBCHINSKY, and SERGEANT OF POLICE

CHIEF OF POLICE: Well, is the cab waiting?

SERGEANT OF POLICE: Yes, sir.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Go down to the street . . . or no, stop! Go bring in . . . But where are the others? Are you just alone? I certainly ordered Prokhorov to be here. Where's Prokhorov?

SERGEANT OF POLICE: Prokhorov is in a private house, but he can hardly be put on the job now.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Why not?

SERGEANT OF POLICE: Because they carried him in this morning dead drunk. They've soused him with two tubs of water, but so far he hasn't sobered up.

CHIEF OF POLICE (*clutching his head*): Oh, my God, my God! Hurry into the street; or no, run first to my room—d'you hear?—and bring me my sword and my new hat. Well, Petr Ivanovich, let's be going!

BOBCHINSKY: Me too, me too! Let me go, too, Anton Antonovich!

CHIEF OF POLICE: No, no, Petr Ivanovich, you simply can't! It's bad form, and there's not room enough in the cab.

BOBCHINSKY: Never mind, never mind; I'll manage; I'll run along behind on my own prongs. I'd just like to peep through a chink in the door to see how he behaves. . . .

CHIEF OF POLICE (*to the POLICEMAN, who hands him his sword*): Run right off and get the patrolmen, and have each of them take . . . How my sword has been scratched! That damned cheat of a merchant, Abdulin: he sees that the Chief of Police has nothing but an old sword, but he won't send me a new one. Oh, what a sly gang! As it is, I think those swindlers are getting complaints ready now to yank out from under their coat-tails. Have every patrolman grab a street—deuce take it—I mean a broom—and tell 'em to sweep the whole street that leads to the inn, and sweep it clean. . . . D'you hear? And look out, you; oh, I know you! You're mighty chummy with everybody, but you'll steal spoons and stick 'em in your leggings! Look out; I've got sharp ears! . . . What did you do to the merchant Chernyayev, ha? He gave you two yards of cloth for your uniform, but you swiped the whole bolt. Look out! You take tips too big for your rank! Now, get out!

SCENE V

The same and POLICE CAPTAIN

CHIEF OF POLICE: Ah, Stepan Ilyich! Say, for God's sake, where've you been hiding out? Whoever heard the like!

POLICE CAPTAIN: Why, I was right outside the gates.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Well, listen here, Stepan Ilyich! An official has come from Petersburg. What arrangements have you made out there?

POLICE CAPTAIN: Why, just as you ordered. I sent Police Sergeant Pugovitsyn with the patrolmen to clean the sidewalk.

CHIEF OF POLICE: But where's Derzhimorda?

POLICE CAPTAIN: Derzhimorda has gone off on the fire wagon.

CHIEF OF POLICE: And Prokhorov's drunk?

POLICE CAPTAIN: He is.

CHIEF OF POLICE: How did you happen to allow that?

POLICE CAPTAIN: Why, God knows. Yesterday there was a fight in the suburbs; he went out to restore order, and came back drunk.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Well, listen, here's your job: Police Sergeant Pugovitsyn . . . he's tall, so you can post him on the bridge for the sake of law and order. Then clear away the old fence next to the shoemaker's as quick as you can, and put up a straw waymark as if surveyors were doing some leveling. The more pulling-down there is, the more it shows activity on the part of the governor of the town. Oh, my God! I had forgotten that there's about forty cartloads of every sort of rubbish heaped up against that fence! What a rotten town! You no sooner set up a monument of some kind, or simply a fence, than people bring on all manner of rubbish, the devil knows

where from! (*He sighs.*) And if that traveling official asks the people in service whether they're satisfied, have 'em say, "We're satisfied with everything, your Honor." And if any one is not satisfied, I'll give him something afterwards to be dissatisfied about! . . . Ow, ow, ow, I'm a sinner, a sinner in many ways! (*He picks up the cardboard hatbox instead of his hat.*) Just grant, O Lord, that I may get all this off my hands as quickly as possible, and I'll set up such a candle as was never lighted before: I'll make every brute of a merchant contribute a hundred pounds of wax. Oh, my God, my God! Let's go, Petr Ivanovich! (*He attempts to put on the box instead of his hat.*)

POLICE CAPTAIN: Anton Antonovich, that's the box, not your hat.

CHIEF OF POLICE (*throwing away the box*): Box, is it? Oh, to hell with it! And if they ask why the church for the almshouse hasn't been built, for which an appropriation was made five years ago, don't forget to say that it was started, but it burned down. I even presented a report on the matter. Even so I suppose some idiot out of sheer stupidity will forget and say that it wasn't ever started. Yes, and tell Derzhimorda not to be too free with his fists; he's always making people see stars in the name of law and order, innocent and guilty alike. Let's go, let's go, Petr Ivanovich! (*He goes out, but returns.*) And don't let the soldiers out on the street without a stitch on; that dirty garrison will put on their uniforms just over their shirts, but with absolutely nothing below! . . . (*They all go out.*)

SCENE VI

ANNA ANDREYEVNA and MARYA ANTONOVNA, *who come in running*

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Where are they? Where are they? Oh, my heavens! . . . (*Opening the door.*) Husband! Antosha, Anton! (*To her daughter, speaking quickly.*) It's your fault, it's all along of you! You would be rummaging for a pin or a neckerchief. (*She runs to the window and calls out.*) Anton, where are you going? Who's come? A government inspector? With a mustache! What sort of mustache?

Voice of the CHIEF OF POLICE: I'll tell you later, dearie.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Later? What d'you know about that! Later! I don't want to wait till later. . . . Tell me in a word; what is he, a colonel? Ha? (*With indifference.*) He's gone! I'll remember that against you! And this girl keeps saying, "Mamma dear, mamma, wait a minute, I'm pinning my neckerchief behind; I'll come right away." Here's your right away for you! And so we haven't found out a

thing! Always your darned primping! You heard that the post-master was here, and you had to go and prink before the mirror, twisting this way and that! She imagines that he's courting her; but he's making faces at you as soon as you turn your back.

MARYA ANTONOVNA: Well, what's to be done, mamma? It's all the same! We'll find out everything in two hours.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: In two hours! I most humbly thank you! There's an obliging answer! I wonder you never thought of saying that we'd know better yet in a month! (*Leaning out of the window.*) Hey, Avdotya! Ha? What? Avdotya, haven't you heard that somebody has arrived? . . . You haven't? What a blockhead! He waved you off? Well, let him, you might have pumped him all the same. You couldn't find that out! Your head's full of nonsense—nothing but your beaux. Ha? They went away in a hurry? Well, you could have run after the cab. Now get along with you this minute! Listen: run and ask where they've gone; and find out everything; who the newcomer is and what he's like, d'you hear? Peek through a crack and find out everything; and what kind of eyes he has, black or not; and come back this minute, d'you hear? Hurry up, hurry up, hurry up, hurry up! (*She keeps shouting until the curtain falls, both of them still standing at the window.*)

ACT II

A small room at the inn. A bed, a table, a trunk, an empty bottle, top-boots, a clothes-brush, and other objects

SCENE I

OSIP (*lying on his master's bed*): Devil take me; I'm so hungry that there's a continual rumbling in my stomach as though the whole regiment were beginning to blow their trumpets. I s'pose we'll never get home, and that's all there is to it. What do you want me to do? You came here two months ago, all the way from Petersburg! You squandered your dough on the road, my boy, and now you sit with your tail between your legs and keep cool. There would have been plenty of money for fares; but no, you had to spread yourself in every town! (*Taking him off.*) "Hey, Osip, run along and look up the best room for me, and order the best dinner possible. I can't eat a poor dinner; I have to have the best." That would be all right if he were really something decent, but he's just a junior clerk. You get

acquainted with some traveler or other—then out with the cards, and first you know you're cleaned out! Bah! I'm sick of such a life! To be sure, it's better in the country: although there's not much society, there's less anxiety; you get yourself a woman and spend your life lying on the sleeping-shelf of the stove and eating meat pies. Of course if anybody wanted to argue about it and get at the truth, living in Petersburg is the best of all. If one only had money, life would be very fine and polished: there are theatres, with dancing dogs, and everything you like. All conversation's smart 'n elegant, second only to that of the nobility. You walk into the Shchukin Bazaar, and the clerks shout "Honorable sir!" at you. Crossing on the ferry boat you sit down with an official. If you want company, walk into a shop: there a military man will tell you about the camp, and explain just what each star means, so that you can see it all as plain as your hand before your face. An old officer's wife will stroll in; and such a pretty housemaid may peep in. . . . Tra, la, la! (*He bursts out laughing and shakes his head.*) Very gallant manners, deuce take it! You never hear an impolite word; every one addresses you as an equal. If you get tired of walking, you take a cab and sit back like a gentleman; and if you don't want to pay the cabby, never mind: every house has front and rear gates, and you can slip through so fast no devil can follow you up. Only one thing is bad: you eat swell one day, but the next you may croak with hunger, like now, for instance. But he's always to blame. What's to be done with him? His dad will send him money, but instead of hanging on to it—nothing of the kind; off he goes on a spree. He rides in cabs, gets a theatre ticket every day, and then at the end of a week he sends me to the old-clothes shop to sell his new dress-coat. Sometimes he'll sell even his last shirt so that he's nothing to put on but his frock-coat and his overcoat. . . . That's the truth, by God! And such fine English cloth, too! One coat cost him one hundred and fifty rubles, but the old clo' dealer got it from him for twenty. As for the trousers, there's nothing to be said: they go for nothing. And why? Because he won't attend to business. Instead of going to his work, he strolls up and down the Nevsky Prospect and plays cards. If the old gentleman should find out—wow! He wouldn't consider the fact that you're an official, but he'd snatch up your little shirt-tail and give you such a hiding that you'd rub yourself for four days. If you're in the service, do your work. Here's the innkeeper now who says he won't give us anything more to eat until we pay for what we've had; but what if we don't pay? (*Sighing.*) Oh Lord, my God, if only I had some cabbage soup, good or bad! I think I could gobble up the world. There's a knock; that's him coming, sure. (*He hops off the bed in a hurry.*)

SCENE II

OSIP and HLESTAKOV

HLESTAKOV: Here, take this. (*He gives OSIP his hat and cane.*)
So you've been lolling on the bed again?

OSIP: Why should I? Haven't I ever seen a bed before?

HLESTAKOV: You're lying, you were lolling! You see, it's all mussed up.

OSIP: What should I muss it for? Don't you suppose I know what a bed is? I have legs; I know how to stand up. What's your bed to me?

HLESTAKOV (*walking about the room*): See if there's any tobacco in the bag yonder.

OSIP: How could there be any? You smoked up the last four days ago.

HLESTAKOV (*walks about and purses up his lips in a variety of ways, finally speaking in a loud and determined voice*): Listen! . . . Hey, Osip!

OSIP: What do you want?

HLESTAKOV (*in a loud, but not so determined voice*): You go down there.

OSIP: Where?

HLESTAKOV (*in a voice quite lacking in determination, softer, and almost entreating*): Downstairs, to the bar . . . and tell them to . . . to send me my dinner.

OSIP: Oh no, I don't want to.

HLESTAKOV: How dare you, blockhead!

OSIP: Why, because it'll be all the same; even if I go, we won't get anything. The boss said he wouldn't give us any more dinners.

HLESTAKOV: How does he dare not give us any? That's nonsense.

OSIP: "I'm going to the Chief of Police," says he; "the gentleman hasn't paid anything for three weeks. You and your master are swindlers," he says, "and your master's a rascal. We've seen spongers and scoundrels like you before."

HLESTAKOV: And I'll bet you're happy, you brute, to be telling me all that now.

OSIP: He says: "A fellow like that will come, live high, run up a bill, and afterwards there's no driving him out. I'm not going to joke," he says; "I'm going to complain straight off and have him taken to the police station and then to jail."

HLESTAKOV: Well, that's enough, you blockhead! Get along with you and tell him! What a vulgar animal!

OSIP: It would be better for me to call the proprietor up here to you.

HLESTAKOV: Why call the proprietor? Go yourself and tell him.

OSIP: But really, sir . . .

HLESTAKOV: Well then, deuce take you, call the proprietor!

(OSIP goes out.)

SCENE III

HLESTAKOV alone

HLESTAKOV: It's awful how hungry I am! I thought that if I'd just take a walk my appetite would go; but no, damned if it would! If I hadn't gone on a spree at Penza, I'd have had the money to get home. That infantry captain hooked me for fair: he plays wonderful faro, the cheat! We sat down for a quarter of an hour in all, and he fleeced me clean. All the same I was crazy to have another go at him, but I didn't have the opportunity. What a rotten hick town! In their lousy shops they won't sell a thing on credit. I call that simply mean. (He begins to whistle an air from "Robert the Devil," then "The Red Sarafan," and finally no particular tune.) Nobody'll come.

SCENE IV

HLESTAKOV, OSIP, and an INN SERVANT

SERVANT: The proprietor told me to ask for your orders.

HLESTAKOV: Good day, my boy! How's your health?

SERVANT: Good, thank God.

HLESTAKOV: Well, how are things with the inn: everything going all right?

SERVANT: Yes, thank God, everything's all right.

HLESTAKOV: Many travelers?

SERVANT: Yes, enough.

HLESTAKOV: Listen, my boy, they haven't brought me my dinner yet, so please hurry up and bring it as quickly as possible; you see, I have something to attend to directly after dinner.

SERVANT: But the boss said he wasn't going to send up anything more. He came near going to the Chief of Police to-day with a complaint.

HLESTAKOV: But why complain? Just consider, my boy, what's the use? You see, I've got to eat. Otherwise I might get thin. I'm awfully hungry; and I'm not joking either.

SERVANT: Exactly, sir. But he said, "I shan't give him anything to eat until he's paid for what he's had." That's what his answer was.

HLESTAKOV: Well, you reason with him; talk him over.

SERVANT: What in the world shall I say to him?

HLESTAKOV: You put it to him seriously that I need to eat. The money is another matter. . . . He thinks that if a peasant like him can go without eating for a day, other people can. What an idea!

SERVANT: All right, I'll tell him.

SCENE V

HLESTAKOV *alone*

HLESTAKOV: It's rotten, all the same, if he won't give me anything at all to eat. I never was so hungry in my life. I wonder whether I could raise something on my clothes? Could I sell my trousers? No, I'd rather go hungry than not go home in my Petersburg suit. It's a pity that Joachim * wouldn't rent me a carriage. It would have been fine, confound it all, to drive up like a swell to some neighboring landowner's front door, with lanterns, and Osip behind in livery. I can imagine how excited they'd all get! "Who's there? What does he want?" And the footman would go in (*drawing himself up straight like a footman*) and announce: "Ivan Alexandrovich Hlestakov, from Petersburg; will you receive him?" They, country bumpkins as they are, don't even know what "will you receive him?" means. When any goose of a landowner goes to see them, he wallows straight into the parlor like a bear. I'd go up to some good-looking young daughter and say, "Madam, how happy I . . ." (*He rubs his hands and scrapes with one foot.*) Fah! (*Spitting.*) I'm sick at my stomach, I'm so hungry.

SCENE VI

HLESTAKOV, OSIP, *then the* SERVANT

HLESTAKOV: Well, what now?

OSIP: They're bringing dinner.

HLESTAKOV (*clapping his hands and making a slight jump in his chair*): Hurrah, they're bringing dinner!

SERVANT (*with plates and a napkin*): This is the last dinner the proprietor will send.

HLESTAKOV: Oh, the proprietor, the proprietor! . . . I spit on your proprietor! What have you got there?

SERVANT: Soup and roast.

HLESTAKOV: What, only two courses?

* "A celebrated horse and carriage dealer of St. Petersburg."—Sykes.

SERVANT: That's all, sir.

HLESTAKOV: What trash is this? I won't accept it. You tell him that this is the limit! . . . That's not enough.

SERVANT: No, the boss says that it's a lot.

HLESTAKOV: But why isn't there any sauce?

SERVANT: There isn't any sauce.

HLESTAKOV: Why isn't there any? I saw them preparing a lot of it myself when I passed by the kitchen. And in the dining-room this morning there were two rather short fellows eating salmon and a lot of other things.

SERVANT: Well, there is some, of course, and there isn't.

HLESTAKOV: What d'you mean, isn't?

SERVANT: There just ain't.

HLESTAKOV: And salmon, and fish, and cutlets?

SERVANT: They're for better people, sir.

HLESTAKOV: Oh, you blockhead!

SERVANT: Yes, sir.

HLESTAKOV: You contemptible little swine! Why do they eat when I don't? Why, damn it all, can't I do as they do? Aren't they travelers just like me?

SERVANT: Why, everybody knows that they ain't.

HLESTAKOV: What are they, then?

SERVANT: The regular sort! Everybody knows: they pay their bills!

HLESTAKOV: I don't care to argue with you, you blockhead. (*He helps himself to soup and begins to eat.*) What kind of soup is this? You've just poured water into the tureen: it hasn't any taste; it merely stinks. I don't want this soup; bring me some other.

SERVANT: I'll remove it, sir. The proprietor said, "If he doesn't want it, he needn't have it."

HLESTAKOV (*protecting the food with his hands*): Well, well, well . . . leave it, you blockhead! You may be used to treating other people like that; but I'm not that sort, my boy. . . . I advise you not to act like that with me. . . . (*He eats.*) My God, what soup! (*He continues eating.*) I think no man on earth to date has ever eaten such soup: there's some kind of feathers swimming around in it instead of grease! (*He cuts the chicken in the soup.*) Ow, ow, ow, what a bird! Give me the roast! There, Osip, there's a little soup left; take it yourself. (*He carves the roast.*) What kind of roast is this? This is no roast.

SERVANT: Why, what is it?

HLESTAKOV: The devil knows *what* it is, but it's not roast. It's roasted ax instead of ox. (*He eats.*) Swindlers, riffraff! What stuff they hand you! Your jaws begin to ache if you swallow a single bite.

(*He picks his teeth with his finger.*) Rascals! It's just like bark—you can't pull it out anyhow; and your teeth will turn black after such dishes. Swindlers! (*Wiping his mouth with his napkin.*) Isn't there anything more?

SERVANT: No.

HLESTAKOV: Riffraff! Rascals! And not even a little sauce or a pudding. Grafters! They simply fleece travelers.

(*The SERVANT and OSIP collect the dishes and carry them away.*)

SCENE VII

HLESTAKOV, *later* OSIP

HLESTAKOV: Really, I feel as if I hadn't eaten a thing: I've just whetted my appetite. If I had any small change, I'd send to the market for a bun.

OSIP (*coming in*): The Chief of Police has come on some errand; he's making inquiries and asking about you.

HLESTAKOV (*frightened*): Well, I declare! Has that brute of an innkeeper managed to complain already? What if he really drags me to jail! What then? I suppose, if he did it in a gentlemanly manner, I might . . . But no, no, I won't! There in town officers and people are strolling about, and I purposely played the swell and exchanged winks with a tradesman's daughter. . . . No, I won't. . . . But how in the world did he dare? What does he take me for, anyhow, a merchant or an artisan? (*He adopts a bold manner and straightens up.*) I'll go right to him and say, "How dare you? How dare . . . ?"

(*The door-handle turns; HLESTAKOV turns pale and shrinks.*)

SCENE VIII

HLESTAKOV, CHIEF OF POLICE, and DOBCHINSKY

Upon entering the room, the CHIEF OF POLICE stands still. He and HLESTAKOV stare at each other wide-eyed in fright for several moments.

CHIEF OF POLICE (*recovering somewhat and standing at attention*): Please accept my greetings!

HLESTAKOV (*bowing*): And mine to you, sir.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Pardon me. . . .

HLESTAKOV: Oh, certainly. . . .

CHIEF OF POLICE: It is my duty as the chief official of the town to see that travelers and members of the nobility experience no inconvenience. . . .

HLESTAKOV (*at first stammering a little, but finally speaking loudly*): But what's to be done? . . . It's not my fault. . . . I'll pay, honest. . . . They'll send me some money from the country. (BOBCHINSKY *peeks in at the door.*) He's more to blame: he sends me beef as tough as a wooden beam; as for soup, the devil knows what he slops into it; I should have thrown it out the window. He starves me out for days at a time. . . . And such queer tea: it smells of fish, but not of tea. Why should I? . . . What an idea!

CHIEF OF POLICE (*losing courage*): Pardon me, I'm really not to blame. There's always good beef in our market. Dealers from Holmogory* supply it, sober men and well-behaved. I don't know where he could get such as you describe. But if anything is not just right . . . Permit me to propose that I remove you to other lodgings.

HLESTAKOV: No, I won't. I know what you mean by other lodgings—the jail. But what right have you? How dare you? . . . Look here, I . . . I'm in the government service in Petersburg. (*Growing bolder.*) I, I, I . . .

CHIEF OF POLICE (*aside*): Oh, Lord my God, how angry he is! He's found out everything, those damned merchants have told him!

HLESTAKOV (*more bravely*): Even if you came with a whole regiment, I wouldn't go. I'll go straight to the Minister! (*Striking the table with his fist.*) What's the matter with you, anyway?

CHIEF OF POLICE (*drawing himself up straight and trembling in every limb*): Have mercy; don't ruin me! Consider my wife, my little children! . . . Don't make a man wretched!

HLESTAKOV: No, I won't go. The idea! What's all that to me? Because you have a wife and children, I have to go to jail—that's grand! (BOBCHINSKY *peeks through the door, then hides in fright.*) No, I humbly thank you, I won't go!

CHIEF OF POLICE (*trembling*): It's my inexperience, God knows, just my inexperience. The insufficiency of my income . . . Please, sir, judge for yourself: my official salary doesn't even buy our tea and sugar. If I've taken a few bribes, they were mere trifles, something or other for the table or for a suit of clothes. And as for the sergeant's widow who keeps a shop, whom I'm supposed to have flogged, that's all slander, God knows it is. All that was thought up by my enemies; they're people who are ready to make an attempt on my life.

HLESTAKOV: What of it? I have nothing to do with them. . . . (*Meditating.*) Still, I don't know why you're talking about your enemies and some sergeant's widow or other. A sergeant's widow is quite another matter, but you won't dare to flog me; you're a long way

* A small town in the province of Archangel, noted for its cattle. (Adapted from Sykes.)

from that job! . . . The idea! What a chap you are! . . . I'll pay, I'll pay the money, but I haven't it now. I'm sticking around here because I haven't a kopek.

CHIEF OF POLICE (*aside*): Oh, a sly trick! What a hint! He makes things hazy, and you can take 'em as you please! There's no knowing how to get at him. Well, I'll make a stab at it, no matter what happens. What will be, will be. I'll take a shot at random. (*Aloud.*) If you're really needing money or something else, I'm ready to help you this very minute. It's my duty to assist travelers.

HLESTAKOV: Lend me, do lend me some! I'll settle with the dirty innkeeper at once. I owe him only about two hundred rubles, a little more or less.

CHIEF OF POLICE (*producing some notes*): Exactly two hundred rubles, but don't trouble to count them.

HLESTAKOV (*taking the money*): I thank you heartily. I'll return the amount at once from the country. . . . This was a sudden embarrassment. . . . I see that you are a gentleman. Now things are very different.

CHIEF OF POLICE (*aside*): Well, thank God, he took the money! Now I think everything will go smoothly. I slipped him four hundred instead of two.

HLESTAKOV: Hey, Osip! (*OSIP comes in.*) Call that waiter here! (*To the CHIEF OF POLICE and DOBCHINSKY.*) But why are you standing? Do me the favor to be seated! (*To DOBCHINSKY.*) Do please sit down.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Oh, no, we're all right standing.

HLESTAKOV: Do please be seated. Now I see perfectly your candor and cordiality; I admit that at first I thought you had come to . . . (*To DOBCHINSKY.*) Sit down! (*The CHIEF OF POLICE and DOBCHINSKY sit down. BOBCHINSKY peeps through the door and listens.*)

CHIEF OF POLICE (*aside*): I'll have to be more daring. He wants us to consider him as traveling incognito. Very good, we can fake, too; we'll pretend we haven't the least idea who he is. (*Aloud.*) While strolling about on my official duties with Petr Ivanovich Dobchinsky, here, a landed proprietor of the vicinity, I came into the inn on purpose to inquire whether the travelers were being well entertained; because I'm not like some police chiefs who don't care about anything. Aside from my duty, out of a Christian love of humanity, I want every mortal to be given a good reception; and here, as if to reward me, chance has afforded me this pleasant acquaintance.

HLESTAKOV: I also am very glad. I confess that except for you, I should have had to stay here a long time: and I absolutely didn't know how I could pay.

CHIEF OF POLICE (*aside*): Why, how you talk! He didn't know how he was going to pay! (*Aloud.*) And may I venture to inquire where you are going?

HLESTAKOV: I'm going to my own village in the province of Saratov.

CHIEF OF POLICE (*aside, with an ironical expression of countenance*): To Saratov, he? And he doesn't blush! Oh, one needs a sharp ear with him! (*Aloud.*) You have undertaken a good task. Concerning the road, they say that while, on the one hand, there is unpleasantness because of the delay for horses, on the other, it's a distraction for the mind. I suppose that you're traveling chiefly for your own pleasure?

HLESTAKOV: No, my father wants to see me. The old gentleman is angry because so far I've not been promoted in Petersburg. He thinks that you've only to go there and they'll stick the Vladimir ribbon in your buttonhole. No—I'd like to send *him* to bustle about in the office!

CHIEF OF POLICE (*aside*): Listen to the yarns he's spinning! He's even tangling up his old daddy! (*Aloud.*) And shall you be gone long?

HLESTAKOV: Indeed, I don't know. You see, my father is obstinate and silly, the old duffer, stubborn as a post. I shall say to him right out: "Whether you like it or not, I can't live away from Petersburg. And why, as a matter of fact, must I ruin my life among peasants? Nowadays a man's needs are quite different: my soul thirsts for enlightenment."

CHIEF OF POLICE (*aside*): How well he strings it together! He lies and lies and never trips himself. And he's such an insignificant little fellow, I think I could squash him with my finger nail. Well, just hold on! I'll make you blab yet. I'll make you talk some more. (*Aloud.*) Your remark is quite correct. What can you do in the wilderness? Now, take it here, for instance: you work all night long; you labor for your fatherland; you spare yourself in no way; but as for your reward, no one knows when you'll get it. (*He glances about the room.*) It strikes me this room is a little damp?

HLESTAKOV: A beastly room, and the bugs surpass any I've ever seen: they bite like bulldogs.

CHIEF OF POLICE: You don't say! Such a cultured guest, and he suffers, from what?—from worthless bugs that should never have been born into the world! Isn't it also a little dark in this room?

HLESTAKOV: Yes, quite dark. The proprietor has introduced the custom of not allowing candles. Sometimes when I want to do something, to read a little, or if I take a fancy to compose something, I can't: it's dark, always dark.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Might I ask you—? But no, I'm unworthy.

HLESTAKOV: Why, what is it?

CHIEF OF POLICE: No, no, I'm unworthy; I'm unworthy.

HLESTAKOV: But what in the world is it?

CHIEF OF POLICE: I might venture . . . At my house there's a room that would just suit you: light, and quiet. . . . But no, I realize that it would be too great an honor for me. . . . Don't be angry! Honest to God, I offered it only in the simplicity of my soul.

HLESTAKOV: On the contrary, I'll accept with pleasure, if you please. It would be much more agreeable for me in a private home than in this dump.

CHIEF OF POLICE: How glad I shall be! And how glad my wife will be, too! That's my disposition, hospitable from my childhood, especially if the guest is a man of culture. Don't think I'm saying this in flattery: no, I haven't that vice; I am expressing myself out of the fullness of my heart.

HLESTAKOV: I thank you heartily. I'm the same: I don't like two-faced people. I'm delighted with your candor and cordiality; and I confess I ask nothing more than to be shown devotion and respect, respect and devotion.

SCENE IX

The same and the INN SERVANT, introduced by OSIP

BOBCHINSKY *continues peeking through the door.*

SERVANT: Did you send for me, sir?

HLESTAKOV: Yes; bring me my bill.

SERVANT: I handed it to you long ago for the second time.

HLESTAKOV: I don't remember your stupid bills. Tell me: how much is it?

SERVANT: On the first day you ordered dinner; on the second you just ate a little kippered salmon; and then you began to order everything on credit.

HLESTAKOV: Blockhead! He's begun to reckon it all over again. What does it come to in all?

CHIEF OF POLICE: Don't trouble yourself; he can wait. (*To the SERVANT.*) Go away; the money'll be sent down.

HLESTAKOV: Yes, indeed; just so. (*He puts away the money. The SERVANT goes out; BOBCHINSKY peeks through the door.*)

SCENE X

CHIEF OF POLICE, HLESTAKOV, DOBCHINSKY

CHIEF OF POLICE: Now wouldn't you like to inspect some of the institutions in our town, the charitable ones and others?

HLESTAKOV: What is there to see?

CHIEF OF POLICE: So you can see how things go with us . . . what sort of order . . .

HLESTAKOV: With great pleasure; I'm ready.

(BOBCHINSKY sticks his head through the door.)

CHIEF OF POLICE: Also, if you wish it, we can go next to the district school to see how the sciences are taught there.

HLESTAKOV: Yes, let's do so.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Then, if you want to visit the prison and the city jails, you will see how we treat criminals.

HLESTAKOV: But why the city jails? We'd better inspect the charitable institutions.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Just as you please. How do you intend to go: in your own carriage, or with me in a cab?

HLESTAKOV: Well, I think I'd better go with you in a cab.

CHIEF OF POLICE (to DOBCHINSKY): Well, Petr Ivanovich, there'll be no place for you.

DOBCHINSKY: Never mind; I'm all right.

CHIEF OF POLICE (softly to DOBCHINSKY): Listen: you run lickety-split and carry two notes, one to Zemlyanika at the hospital and the other to my wife. (To HLESTAKOV.) May I venture to ask your permission to write in your presence a line to my wife, bidding her prepare for the reception of an honored guest?

HLESTAKOV: Certainly. . . . Here's the ink; but as for paper, I don't know . . . How about the back of this bill?

CHIEF OF POLICE: I'll write on that. (He writes, meanwhile talking to himself.) Now we'll see how things will go after lunch and a big-bellied bottle! We have some provincial Madeira—not much to look at, but it'll knock an elephant off its feet. If I could only find out what sort of fellow he is, and how much I need to be afraid of him. (Having written, he hands the notes to DOBCHINSKY, who approaches the door; but at that moment the door falls off its hinges, and BOBCHINSKY, who has been listening on the other side, flies into the room with it. All utter exclamations. BOBCHINSKY picks himself up.)

HLESTAKOV: I hope you didn't hurt yourself anywhere?

BOBCHINSKY: Not at all, not at all, sir, not the least derangement, sir; only a little scratch over my nose. I'll run over to Christian Ivano-

vich; he has some kind of little plaster, sir, and it'll soon get well.

CHIEF OF POLICE (*to HLESTAKOV, after making a reproachful sign to BOBCHINSKY*): That's nothing, sir. If you please, we'll go now. And I'll tell your servant to bring your trunk over. (*To OSIP.*) My good fellow, just bring everything over to my house, to the Police Chief's residence—any one will show you the way. After you, sir. (*He permits HLESTAKOV to go out first and follows him; then, turning around, he speaks reproachfully to BOBCHINSKY.*) That's you all over! You couldn't find any other place to fall! And there you sprawled like the devil knows what! (*He goes out, BOBCHINSKY after him. The curtain falls.*)

ACT III

The same room as in Act I

SCENE I

ANNA ANDREYEVNA and MARYA ANTONOVNA are standing at the window in the same positions.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Well now, we've been waiting a whole hour, and all the time you with your silly primping: you were all dressed, but no! you still had to rummage! . . . I shouldn't have listened to her at all. What an annoyance! As if on purpose, there's not a soul about! It's as if everything had died.

MARYA ANTONOVNA: But really, mamma, in two minutes we'll find out everything. Avdotya must be back soon. (*She looks out of the window and exclaims.*) Oh, mamma, mamma! Some one's coming, there at the end of the street!

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Where is he? You're always having crazy notions. Well, sure enough. But who is it? Medium-sized . . . in a dress coat. . . . Who can it be? Ha? Isn't that annoying! Who in the world can it be?

MARYA ANTONOVNA: It's Dobchinsky, mamma!

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Dobchinsky, my foot! You're always imagining things! . . . It can't be Dobchinsky. (*She waves her handkerchief.*) Hey, you, come here! Hurry up!

MARYA ANTONOVNA: Really, mamma, it is Dobchinsky.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: There you go, always quarreling! I tell you it's *not* Dobchinsky.

MARYA ANTONOVNA: Aha, mamma, what did I tell you? You see, it *is* Dobchinsky.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Well, yes, it's Dobchinsky; I see now—why are

you arguing about it? (*Shouting out of the window.*) Hurry up, hurry up; you're too slow! Well, where are they? Huh? Go ahead and talk from where you are. What? Very severe? Huh? And my husband? Where's my husband? (*Leaning slightly out of the window, with vexation.*) What a boob: until he gets into the very room, he won't tell a thing!

SCENE II

The same and DOBCHINSKY

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Now, please tell me: well, aren't you ashamed? I relied on you as a decent man. They all rode off in a hurry, and you after them; and I can't get a sensible word from anybody since. Aren't you ashamed? I christened your Johnny and your Lizzie, and then you act like that with me!

DOBCHINSKY: Heavens, godmother, I ran so fast to prove my respect for you that I can't catch my breath. My respects, Marya Antonovna.

MARYA ANTONOVNA: How do you do, Petr Ivanovich.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Well, what's the news? Tell me what happened and how.

DOBCHINSKY: Anton Antonovich has sent you a note.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: But what's the man like? Is he a general?

DOBCHINSKY: No, he's not a general; but he's not inferior to one in education and elegant manners.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Aha! Then he must be the one they wrote to my husband about.

DOBCHINSKY: The very same. I was the first to discover the fact, along with Petr Ivanovich.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Well, tell us what happened and how.

DOBCHINSKY: Well, thank God, everything is all right. At first he wanted to treat Anton Antonovich rather rough; yes, he did. He got angry and said that everything was bad at the inn, that he wouldn't go to his house, and wouldn't go to jail on his account; but afterwards, when he found out Anton Antonovich's innocence, and had talked a little more to the point with him, he changed his attitude all at once, and, thank God, everything came out fine. Now they've gone to have a look at the charitable institutions. . . . I admit that Anton Antonovich was thinking that there had been some secret denunciation; I was a little bit scared myself.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: What have you to be afraid of? You're not in the service.

DOBCHINSKY: Well, you know how it is when a bigwig talks: you feel scared.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Oh, the idea! . . . That's all nonsense. Now tell us: what's he like? Is he old or young?

DOBCHINSKY: Young—a young man, about twenty-three years old; but he talks just like an old man. "By all means," he says, "I'll go there, and there, too" . . . (*waving his hands*) and he says it all so grandly. "I like to write and to read," he says, "but I'm annoyed by the darkness of the room."

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: But what does he look like? Is he light or dark-complexioned?

DOBCHINSKY: No, more of a chestnut. And he has such quick eyes, like some little animal's; they're positively disconcerting.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Well, what's he written me in this note? (*She reads.*) "I hasten to inform you, my dear, that my situation was altogether lamentable; but trusting in God's clemency, item, for two salted cucumbers and for half a portion of caviar, twenty-five kopeks—" (*Pausing.*) I don't understand a thing: what's this about pickles and caviar?

DOBCHINSKY: Oh, Anton Antonovich just wrote that on a piece of scratch paper to save time: some sort of bill had been written on it.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Oh, I see. (*Continuing her reading.*) "But trusting in God's clemency, it looks as if everything would come out all right. Hurry and get a room ready for an important guest, the one hung with yellow wall paper; you needn't go to any extra trouble for dinner because we're going to have a bite at the hospital, with Artemy Filippovich, but order a lot of wine; tell the dealer Abdulin to send his very best; if he doesn't, I'll overhaul his whole cellar. Kissing your little hand, sweetheart, I remain your Anton Skvoznik-Dmukhanovsky." . . . Oh, good heavens! We'll have to hurry! Hey, who's there? Mishka!

DOBCHINSKY (*running to the door and shouting*): Mishka! Mishka! Mishka!

(MISHKA comes in.)

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Listen: run to the merchant Abdulin . . . wait, I'll give you a note. (*She sits down at the table and writes a note, talking meanwhile.*) Give this note to the coachman, Sidor, and have him run to the merchant Abdulin's and get some wine. You yourself go at once and get the room in fine shape for a guest. Put up a bed and a washstand, and so forth.

DOBCHINSKY: Well, Anna Andreyevna, I'll hurry off now to see how the inspection's going on.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Go along, go along! I'm not keeping you!

SCENE III

ANNA ANDREYEVNA and MARYA ANTONOVNA

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Now, Mashenka, we'll have to see about the way we're dressed. He's a Petersburg dandy; God forbid he should laugh at anything! The most becoming thing you can put on is your blue dress with the little flounces.

MARYA ANTONOVNA: Fudge, mamma, the blue! I don't like it at all! Lyapkin-Tyapkin's daughter wears blue, and so does Zemlyanika's. No, I'd better put on my flowered dress.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: The flowered dress! . . . Really, you're saying that to be spiteful. The other'll be much better, because I want to wear my straw-colored; I'm very fond of straw color.

MARYA ANTONOVNA: Oh, mamma, it doesn't become you at all!

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: It doesn't become me?

MARYA ANTONOVNA: No, it doesn't; I'll bet anything you please, it doesn't; you've got to have dark eyes to wear straw color.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Well, upon my word! And haven't I got dark eyes? As dark as can be. What nonsense she's talking! How can they be otherwise when I always tell my fortune by the queen of clubs?

MARYA ANTONOVNA: Why, mamma! You usually tell it by the queen of hearts!

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Nonsense, absolute nonsense! I never was the queen of hearts! (*She hastily goes out with MARYA ANTONOVNA and continues talking in the wings.*) What's she imagining now! The queen of hearts! Heaven knows what she means! (*After they have gone out a door opens, and MISHKA is seen throwing out some trash. Through another door OSIP comes in with a trunk on his head.*)

SCENE IV

MISHKA and OSIP

OSIP: Which way?

MISHKA: This way, uncle, this way!

OSIP: Wait, let me get my breath first. Oh, what a dog's life! Every load seems heavy on an empty belly.

MISHKA: Well, uncle, what d'you say? Will the general be here soon?

OSIP: What general?

MISHKA: Why, your boss.

OSIP: My boss? Is he a general?

MISHKA: Well, isn't he?

OSIP: He is, only over the left.

MISHKA: Is that more or less than a real general?

OSIP: More.

MISHKA: You don't say! That's why they've kicked up such a rumpus.

OSIP: Listen, my boy; I see you're a smart fellow; just get me something to eat!

MISHKA: There's nothing ready for you yet, uncle. You aren't going to eat common chow, but when your boss sits down to the table, they'll give you the same as he gets.

OSIP: What kind of common food have you got?

MISHKA: Cabbage soup, porridge, and pies.

OSIP: Give us your cabbage soup, porridge, and pies! That's all right, I'll eat everything. Well, let's carry in the trunk. Is there another way out?

MISHKA: Yes. (*They carry the trunk into a room at one side.*)

SCENE V

The POLICEMEN open both wings of the door. HLESTAKOV comes in, after him the CHIEF OF POLICE, the SUPERVISOR OF CHARITABLE INSTITUTIONS, the SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS, DOBCHINSKY and BOBCHINSKY, the latter with a plaster on his nose. The CHIEF OF POLICE shows the POLICEMEN a piece of paper on the floor; they run to pick it up, bumping each other at full speed.

HLESTAKOV: Very good institutions. I'm delighted that you show visitors everything in the town. They didn't show me anything in the other towns.

CHIEF OF POLICE: In other towns, I venture to inform you, the city managers and the other officials are more concerned about their own profit; but here, I may say, there is no other thought but to deserve by good order and vigilance the attention of the authorities.

HLESTAKOV: The lunch was very good. I quite overate myself. Do you fare like that every day?

CHIEF OF POLICE: That was especially for our welcome guest.

HLESTAKOV: I'm fond of eating. That's what we live for: to cull the flowers of pleasure. What was that fish called?

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH (*running up*): Aberdeen cod, sir.

HLESTAKOV: Very tasty. Where was it we had lunch—in the hospital?

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: Just so, sir, in the charity hospital.

HLESTAKOV: I remember, I remember, there were some beds there. Have the patients all recovered? It seems to me there weren't many.

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: About ten remain, no more; the rest have all got well. That's the way it's arranged: such order! From the time I undertook the management—incredible as it may seem to you—all of them have been getting well, like flies.* A patient can hardly enter the hospital before he's cured, not so much by the medicines as by the reliability of the management.

CHIEF OF POLICE: The obligations of a chief of police are, I venture to inform you, simply head-breaking! So many different things devolve on him, concerning sanitation alone, repairs, and reconstruction . . . in a word, the wisest man might find himself in a quandary; but, thanks be to God, everything is coming out splendidly. Any other police chief, of course, would look out for his own profit; but—would you believe it?—even when I lie down to sleep I think: "O Lord my God, how can I bring it to pass that the authorities may perceive my zeal and be satisfied?" . . . Whether they will reward me or not is, of course, up to them; but at least I shall be at peace in my own heart. When there is order everywhere in the city, the streets swept clean, the people under arrest well cared for, and few drunkards . . . why, what more can I do? And in truth, I want no honors. Of course, honors are alluring, but compared to virtue, they are all ashes and vanity.

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH (*aside*): Oho, the grafter, how thick he spreads it! God gave him a gift for it!

HLESTAKOV: That is true. I admit that I myself like to philosophize once in a while: I toss things off sometimes in prose, sometimes in verse.

BOBCHINSKY (*to DOBCHINSKY*): Correct, all correct, Petr Ivanovich! Such remarks . . . one can see he's studied the sciences.

HLESTAKOV: Tell me, please, don't you ever have any amusements or social gatherings—where one might, for instance, play a game of cards?

CHIEF OF POLICE (*aside*): Aha, my boy, we know what window-pane you're pebbling now! (*Aloud.*) God forbid! There's not even a rumor about such social gatherings here! I've never had cards in my hands; I don't even know how to play cards. I never could even look at them calmly; and if I ever happen to catch sight of such a thing as a king of diamonds, such disgust comes over me that I simply have to spit. It happened once that to amuse the children I built a little house of cards, but afterwards I had the damndest dreams all night long. Deuce take them! How can people kill such precious time with them?

LUKA LUKICH (*aside*): But you cleaned me out of a hundred rubles yesterday, you scoundrel!

*The humor lies in the reference to the usual Russian phrase, "They die like flies." (Adapted from Sykes.)

CHIEF OF POLICE: I could use that time better in the service of the state.

HLESTAKOV: However, you put it too strongly. . . . All depends upon the way in which you look at the thing. If, for instance, you pass when you ought to raise your ante . . . then, of course . . . No, I disagree: sometimes playing is very tempting.

SCENE VI

The same, ANNA ANDREYEVNA, and MARYA ANTONOVNA

CHIEF OF POLICE: I venture to present my family: my wife and daughter.

HLESTAKOV (*making a bow*): How fortunate I am, madam, to have, as it were, the pleasure of seeing you.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: It is even more agreeable for us to see such a personage.

HLESTAKOV (*strutting*): Pardon me, madam, quite the contrary: my pleasure is greater.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: How can that be, sir! You are pleased to say that out of compliment. Won't you please be seated?

HLESTAKOV: Merely to stand beside you is happiness: nevertheless, if such be unmistakably your wish, I shall be seated. How happy I am at last to be sitting beside you!

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Really, sir, I cannot take that compliment to myself. . . . I suppose that after the capital, a tour of the country has seemed very unpleasant?

HLESTAKOV: Exceedingly unpleasant. Accustomed to live, *comprenez-vous*, in society and suddenly to find oneself on the road: dirty eating-houses, the darkness of ignorance . . . I confess, that were it not for this circumstance (*glancing at ANNA ANDREYEVNA and posing*) which has compensated me for everything . . .

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Indeed, how unpleasant it must have been for you.

HLESTAKOV: However, madam, at this minute it is very pleasant for me.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Oh, really, sir! You do me too much honor. I do not deserve it.

HLESTAKOV: Why do you not deserve it? You do deserve it, madam.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: I live in the country. . . .

HLESTAKOV: But the country also has its hillocks and its streamlets. . . . Of course, who'd compare it with Petersburg? Oh, Petersburg! What a life, truly! You may think that I am only a copying clerk;

but no, I'm on a friendly footing with the chief of my department. He'll clap me on the shoulder and say, "Come have dinner with me, my boy!" I drop in at the office for two minutes, only long enough to say how things are to be done. And there the copy-clerk, poor rat, goes scribbling away with his pen, tr, tr. . . . They even wanted to make me a collegiate assessor;* but I thought, what for? And the porter flies up the stairs after me with a brush: "If you please, Ivan Alexandrovich," he says, "I'll clean your boots." (*To the CHIEF OF POLICE.*) Why are you standing, gentlemen? Please be seated.

| | | |
|--------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| CHIEF OF POLICE | } (<i>speaking together</i>) : | { Our rank is such that we can stand. We'll just stand. Please don't disturb yourself. |
| ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH | | |
| LUKA LUKICH | | |

HLESTAKOV: All rank aside, I beg you to be seated. (*The CHIEF OF POLICE and all sit down.*) I don't like ceremony. On the contrary, I try and try to slip through unnoticed. But it's impossible to hide oneself, quite impossible! I can hardly go out anywhere but they begin saying, "There goes Ivan Alexandrovich!" Once they even took me for the commander-in-chief: the soldiers jumped out of the guard-rooms and presented arms. Afterwards an officer with whom I am well acquainted said to me: "Well, my boy, we positively took you for the commander-in-chief."

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: You don't say!

HLESTAKOV: I'm acquainted with the pretty actresses. You see, I've written a few theatrical sketches. . . . I often see literary people. I'm on friendly terms with Pushkin. I often say to him, "Well, now Pushkin, my boy, how goes it?" "Oh, so-so, old chap," he'll reply, "just so-so. . . ." He's a great character!

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: And so you even write? How delightful it must be to be an author! Do you really contribute to the magazines?

HLESTAKOV: Yes, I contribute to the magazines. Besides, my works are numerous: *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Robert the Devil*, *Norma*.† I don't even remember all their titles. And it was all by accident: I didn't want to write, but the theatre management said, "Please write something, old boy." So I thought to myself, "Well, go ahead, old fellow." And then all of a sudden, one evening, I think it was, I wrote the whole thing and astonished everybody. I have extraordinary ease in thinking. Everything that has appeared under the name of Baron Brambeus‡—*The Frigate Hope*,§ and the *Moscow Telegraph* ¶ . . . I wrote all that.

*The eighth rank in the Russian service; Hlestakov is in the fourteenth!

†Operas by Mozart, Meyerbeer, and Bellini. (Adapted from Sykes.)

‡Pseudonym of the popular author, Sienkowski (1800-1858).

§A novel by Bestuzhev.

¶A newspaper.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: You don't say! And so you were Brambeus?

HLESTAKOV: Of course; I correct all their articles. Smirdin * pays me forty thousand for doing it.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: I dare say *Yury Miloslavsky* † is your work also.

HLESTAKOV: Yes, that's my work.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: I guessed it at once.

MARYA ANTONOVNA: But, mamma, it says on the binding that it was written by Mr. Zagoskin.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: There you go: I knew that you'd argue even here.

HLESTAKOV: Oh, yes, that is true: that is Zagoskin's; but there's another *Yury Miloslavsky*, and that's mine.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Well, it's certain that I read yours. So well written!

HLESTAKOV: I confess that I exist by literature. Mine is the foremost house in Petersburg. It's even known as Ivan Alexandrovich's house. (*Turning to all present.*) Do me the favor, ladies and gentlemen, to come to see me when you are in Petersburg. I also give balls.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: I suppose that balls there must be given with remarkable taste and magnificence?

HLESTAKOV: It's simply beyond description. On the table, for instance, is a watermelon—a watermelon costing seven hundred rubles. Soup ready in the tureen has come directly from Paris by steamer; raise the lid and there's a fragrant steam the like of which you can't find in nature. I go to balls every day. We've formed our own whist club: the Minister of Foreign Affairs, the French Ambassador, the English, the German Ambassadors, and I. We nearly kill ourselves playing; really, you never saw anything like it. As I run up the stairs to my fourth-story apartment, I just say to the cook: "Here, Mavrushka, my overcoat! . . ." What am I lying about! I quite forgot that I live on the second floor. My staircase alone is worth . . . But it would be curious to glance into my hall before I'm awake mornings: counts and princes jostle each other and hum there like bees, you can hear nothing but buzz, buzz. . . . Sometimes even the Minister . . . (*The CHIEF OF POLICE and others timidly rise from their chairs.*) My mail even comes addressed to "Your Excellency." Once I was even the director of a department. It's strange: the director went away—no one knows where. Well, naturally there was a lot of talk as to who should occupy the post. Many of the generals applied eagerly and got it, but when they started to work, it was no go—too hard. The job looks easy enough, but just examine it; why, it's the very deuce! After-

* A noted St. Petersburg publisher. † A famous historical novel.

wards they saw there was nothing to do but give it to me. And that very minute they sent messengers through the streets, messengers, messengers, and messengers . . . you can imagine for yourself: thirty-five thousand messengers! What a situation, I ask you! "Ivan Alexandrovich, go take charge of the department!" I confess that I felt somewhat uneasy. I came out in my dressing gown. I wanted to decline, but I thought, this will get to the tsar; and then, there's the service record! . . . "Very well, gentlemen, I accept the post," I said; "I accept it," I said; "So be it," I said; "I accept; only look out for me; I have sharp ears! You know me. . . ." And that's the way it was: it used to be, when I walked through the department, as if an earthquake had struck them: every one was trembling and shaking like a leaf. (*The CHIEF OF POLICE and the others shake with fear; HLESTAKOV grows more excited.*) Oh, I don't like to joke; I gave them all a bawling-out. The Council of State itself is afraid of me. And why not, indeed? Because I'm that kind of man. I don't care for anybody. . . . I tell 'em all, "I know my business; shut up!" I go everywhere, everywhere! I drive to the Palace every day. Why, to-morrow they're going to make me a field-mar— (*He slips and almost sprawls upon the floor, but the officials respectfully support him.*)

CHIEF OF POLICE (*approaching, trembling in every limb, and striving to speak out*): You—your—your . . .

HLESTAKOV (*in a rapid, abrupt tone*): What is it?

CHIEF OF POLICE: You—your—

HLESTAKOV (*in the same tone*): I can't make out anything; it's all nonsense.

CHIEF OF POLICE: You . . . your . . . your Excellency, don't you wish to rest? . . . Here's your room, and everything that you need.

HLESTAKOV: Rest—bosh! All right. I'm willing to have a rest. Your lunch, gentlemen, was good. . . . I'm satisfied, I'm satisfied. . . . (*Declaiming.*) Aberdeen! Aberdeen cod! (*He goes into a side room, followed by the CHIEF OF POLICE.*)

SCENE VII

The same without HLESTAKOV and the CHIEF OF POLICE

BOBCHINSKY (*to DOBCHINSKY*): There's a man for you, Petr Ivanovich! That's what I call a man! Never in my life have I been in the presence of so important a personage; I all but died of fright. What do you think his rank may be, Petr Ivanovich?

DOBCHINSKY: I think almost a general.

BOBCHINSKY: And I think a general isn't fit to pull off his boots;

but if he's a general, he's a generalissimo. Did you hear how he squashed the Council of State? Let's go quick and tell Ammos Fedorovich and Korobkin. Good-by, Anna Andreyevna!

DOBCHINSKY (*to ANNA ANDREYEVNA*): Good-by, godmother!
(*They both go out.*)

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH (*to LUKA LUKICH*): It's simply terrifying, but just why, you can't tell, yourself. We haven't even got into our uniforms. Well, do you suppose he'll send off a report to Petersburg when he wakes up? (*They go out thoughtfully along with the SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS, saying as they go.*) Good-by, madam!

SCENE VIII

ANNA ANDREYEVNA and MARYA ANTONOVNA

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Oh, what a charming man!

MARYA ANTONOVNA: Oh, what a darling!

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: But what refinement in everything he does! You can see at once he's a Petersburg swell. His manners, and all that. . . . Oh, how nice! I'm crazy over young men like him! I simply lose my head over them. And moreover, he took a fancy to me; I noticed that he kept glancing my way.

MARYA ANTONOVNA: Why, mamma, he was looking at me!

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: I'll thank you to be off with your nonsense. It's quite out of place here.

MARYA ANTONOVNA: No, mamma, really!

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Well, I declare! God forbid we should quarrel about it! That will do! Why should he look at you? What reason would he have for looking at you?

MARYA ANTONOVNA: Really, mamma, he kept looking at me. First when he began to talk about literature, he gave me a look; and then when he was telling about how he played whist with the ambassadors, he looked at me again.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Well, maybe, once or twice, but that's all it amounted to. "Oh, I'll just take a look at her!" he said to himself.

SCENE IX

The same and the CHIEF OF POLICE

CHIEF OF POLICE (*coming in on tiptoes*): Sh, sh!

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: What is it?

CHIEF OF POLICE: I'm sorry I got him drunk. What if half he says is true? (*Reflecting.*) And why shouldn't it be true? When he's

on a spree, a man brings everything to the surface: whatever is in his heart is on his tongue. Of course, he lied a little; but unless you lie a little bit, no conversation is possible. He plays cards with the Ministers and drives to the Palace. . . . And so really, the more you think about it . . . the devil knows who he is. . . . I don't know what's going on in my head; it's as if I were either standing on a sort of steeple or were just about to be hanged.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: And I felt absolutely no timidity whatever; I simply saw in him an educated, high-toned man of the world, and his rank was nothing to me.

CHIEF OF POLICE: That's the way with you women! That word "women" sums it all up! They always fall for fiddle-faddle! They wise-crack about anything that comes into their noddles. They get off with a whipping, but the husband's as good as dead. You, sweet soul, behaved as familiarly with him as if he were another Dobchinsky.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: I advise you not to be uneasy on that score. We know a thing or two. . . . (*Glancing at her daughter.*)

CHIEF OF POLICE (*to himself*): Well, what's the use of talking to you women! . . . Here's a fix, indeed! I haven't yet been able to get over my fright. (*He opens the door and speaks off stage.*) Mishka! Call Police Sergeants Svistunov and Derzhimorda: they're outside the gate somewhere or other. (*After a brief silence.*) Everything in the world has turned queer; you might expect a man to be something to look at; but such a lean, skinny fellow—how are you going to know who he is? If a man's military, the fact shows plainly enough; but when he puts on a dress coat, he's like a fly with his wings pulled off. He whooped it up such a long time at the inn a while ago, and faked up such a lot of fairy tales and bunk that you'd never make sense of it in a lifetime. But then he finally gave in. He even blabbed more than he needed to. Evidently he's a young man.

SCENE X

The same and OSIP

They all run to meet him, beckoning.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Come here, my good fellow.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Sh! . . . Well, what about it? Is he asleep?

OSIP: Not yet; he's stretching a bit.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Listen; what's your name?

OSIP: Osip, madam.

CHIEF OF POLICE (*to his wife and daughter*): That'll do for you! (*To OSIP.*) Well now, my boy, have they fed you well?

OSIP: They have, I thank you heartily; very well indeed.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Tell me: an awful lot of counts and princes call on your master, don't they?

OSIP (*aside*): What shall I say? If they've fed me well now, they'll do even better later. (*Aloud.*) Yes, even counts come.

MARYA ANTONOVNA: My dear Osip, how good-looking your master is!

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: And please tell us, Osip, how he . . .

CHIEF OF POLICE: Oh, please stop! You only mix me up with such silly talk. Now then, my friend! . . .

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: What rank has your master?

OSIP: Oh, he has the usual thing.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Oh, my God, you keep asking such silly questions! You won't let me get in a word to the point. Now, my friend, what sort of man is your master? . . . Strict? Does he like to bawl people out or doesn't he?

OSIP: Yes, he likes to have things orderly. He sees to it that everything around him is kept ship-shape.

CHIEF OF POLICE: I like your face very much. My friend, you must be a good fellow. Now, what—?

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Listen, Osip, does your master wear his uniform at home?

CHIEF OF POLICE: Really, that'll do, chatterboxes that you are! This is a serious business: it's a question of a man's life. (*To OSIP.*) Well, now, my friend, I like you very much. When traveling there's no harm, you know, in taking an extra little glass of tea—the weather has turned cooler—so here's a couple of rubles for tea.

OSIP (*taking the money*): Thank you very much, sir! God grant you the best of health! I'm a poor man, and you've helped me.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Good, good, the pleasure is mine. Now what, my friend—?

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Listen, Osip, what kind of eyes does your master like best?

MARYA ANTONOVNA: Osip, dear, what a darling little nose your master has!

CHIEF OF POLICE: Oh, stop! Let me! . . . (*To OSIP.*) Now please tell me, my boy: to what does your master pay the most attention, that is, what pleases him most in traveling?

OSIP: What he likes depends on circumstances. Most of all he likes to be well received; he likes good entertainment.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Good entertainment?

OSIP: Yes, sir. Now take me, for instance, I'm only a serf, but he sees that I'm well treated, too. Darned if he doesn't! Sometimes

when we go to a place, he'll say: "Well, Osip, did they treat you well?" "Badly, your Honor!" "Hm," he'll say, "he's a bad host, Osip. Remind me of that when I get home." "Aha," I think to myself (*waving his hand*); "I should worry; I'm a plain man."

CHIEF OF POLICE: Very good, you're talking sense. There, I've given you something for tea; here's something more for biscuits.

OSIP: Why do you favor me, your Honor? (*He pockets the money.*) I'll drink your health.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Come to me, Osip, and I'll give you something, too.

MARYA ANTONOVNA: Osip, dear, take your master a kiss from me! (*HLESTAKOV is heard coughing in the next room.*)

CHIEF OF POLICE: Sh! . . . (*Rising upon tiptoe, and finishing the scene in a subdued voice.*) God forbid your making any noise! Go to your own rooms—you've said enough. . . .

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Let's go, Mashenka! I told you that I noticed something in our guest that only we two can talk about.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Oh, they'll talk enough! I think if I went to listen to them, I'd have to stuff my ears. (*Turning to OSIP.*) Now, my friend. . . .

SCENE XI

The same, DERZHIMORDA and SVISTUNOV

CHIEF OF POLICE: Sh! You stamp with your boots like bow-legged bears! You make a thumping like dumping a ton of rocks out of a cart! Where the devil have you been?

DERZHIMORDA: I was acting on your orders. . . .

CHIEF OF POLICE: Sh! (*Putting his hand over the POLICEMAN'S mouth.*) You croak like a crow! (*Imitating him.*) "I was acting on your orders!" Roaring like an empty barrel! (*To OSIP.*) Now, my friend, run along and get everything ready for your master. Command everything there is in the house. (*OSIP goes out.*) As for you two, go stand on the doorstep and don't move! And don't let any outsider into the house, especially tradesmen! If you let in a single one, I'll . . . Only see to it that if any one comes with a complaint or even looks as if he had a complaint to present against me, throw him out on his neck! Sock it to him! Like that! (*Illustrating a kick.*) Do you get me? Sh . . . sh. . . . (*He goes out on tiptoe after the POLICEMEN.*)

ACT IV

The same room in the house of the CHIEF OF POLICE

SCENE I

Enter carefully, almost on tiptoe, AMMOS FEDOROVICH, ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH, the POSTMASTER, LUKA LUKICH, DOBCHINSKY, and BOBCHINSKY in full dress uniforms. The whole scene proceeds in an undertone.

AMMOS FEDOROVICH (*arranging them all in a semicircle*): For God's sake, gentlemen, make a circle as quickly as possible and put on your best manner! Confound him, he rides to the Palace and bawls out the Council of State! Draw up in military order; it must be in military order. You run over to that side, Petr Ivanovich; and you, Petr Ivanovich, stand right here.

(*Both PETR IVANOVICHES run on tiptoe.*)

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH. If you're willing, Ammos Fedorovich, we ought to undertake something or other.

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: Just what exactly?

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: Everybody knows what.

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: Slip him something?

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: Well, yes, slip him something.

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: It's dangerous, deuce take it! He might raise Cain—a government man like him! But how about an offering on the part of the nobility for a memorial of some sort?

POSTMASTER: Or say this: "Here is some money left unclaimed at the post office."

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: Look out that he doesn't send *you* away somewhere by post! Listen: things aren't done like that in a well-regulated state. Why is there a whole squadron of us here? We should introduce ourselves one by one; and then, between man and man, everything is fixed, and nothing leaks out. That's the way it's done in a well-regulated society! Now you'll be the first to begin, Ammos Fedorovich.

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: It would be better for you: our august guest broke bread in your establishment.

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: It would be still better for you, Luka Lukich, as the enlightener of youth.

LUKA LUKICH: I can't, I can't, gentlemen! I confess I was so brought up that if I have to talk with a man one rank higher than mine, I get heart failure and my tongue seems to stick in the mud. No, gentlemen, you really must relieve me!

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: Yes, Ammos Fedorovich, there's no one but you. You have only to say a word, and Cicero fairly flies off your tongue!

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: What are you talking about! Cicero! See here, what have you thought up! What if I do get carried away sometimes, talking about my house dogs or my hunting hounds? . . .

ALL (*surrounding him*): No, not only about dogs; you can talk about the Tower of Babel, too. . . * No, Ammos Fedorovich, don't abandon us, be a father to us! . . . No, Ammos Fedorovich!

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: Let me be, gentlemen!

(*At this moment steps and coughing are heard in HLESTAKOV's room. All vie with each other in their haste to reach the door, crowding and trying to get out, which they do only with some squeezing. A few exclamations are heard in undertones.*)

VOICE OF BOBCHINSKY: Ow! Petr Ivanovich, you stepped on my foot, Petr Ivanovich!

VOICE OF ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: Let me out, gentlemen; you've squeezed me as flat as a soul in Purgatory!

(*A few gasping exclamations of "Ow! ow!" are heard; finally all have been pushed out, and the room remains empty.*)

SCENE II

HLESTAKOV *alone, entering sleepy-eyed*

HLESTAKOV: I think I must have snored properly. Where did they get such mattresses and feather beds? I fairly perspired. They must have slipped me something strong at lunch yesterday; my head still goes bang. So far as I can see, a fellow can spend his time agreeably here. I like cordiality; and I admit I like it best of all when people gratify me out of sheer kind-heartedness rather than for their personal interest. The Chief of Police's daughter isn't half bad to look at, and even her mamma might perhaps . . . Well, I don't know, but I sure like this life.

SCENE III

HLESTAKOV *and the JUDGE (AMMOS FEDOROVICH)*

AMMOS FEDOROVICH (*upon entering, stops, and says to himself*): My God, my God! Make this come out right! My knees will hardly hold me up. (*Aloud, drawing himself up, and grasping his sword-hilt.*)

* "The allusion is to the Judge's skepticism."—Sykes.

I have the honor to introduce myself: Judge of the local District Court, Collegiate Assessor Lyapkin-Tyapkin.

HLESTAKOV: I beg you to sit down. So you're the Judge here?

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: In 1816 I was elected to a three-year term by the will of the nobility and I have held the post ever since.

HLESTAKOV: It's profitable to be Judge, isn't it?

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: After three terms I was presented with the order of Vladimir of the Fourth Class, with the commendation of the authorities. (*Aside.*) The money is in my fist, and my fist is on fire!

HLESTAKOV: I like the Vladimir. Now the Anna of the Third Class isn't so good.

AMMOS FEDOROVICH (*little by little thrusting forward his closed fist, aside*): O Lord God! I don't know where I'm sitting. It's as if I had live coals under me.

HLESTAKOV: What have you got in your hand?

AMMOS FEDOROVICH (*flustered, and letting some notes fall to the floor*): Nothing, sir.

HLESTAKOV: Nothing, you say? I see you've dropped some money.

AMMOS FEDOROVICH (*trembling all over*): Not at all, sir! (*Aside.*) O God, here I am in the dock, and they're bringing up the police cart to get me!

HLESTAKOV (*picking it up*): Yes, it's money.

AMMOS FEDOROVICH (*aside*): Well, it's all over! I'm lost and done for!

HLESTAKOV: I say, won't you lend it to me?

AMMOS FEDOROVICH (*hastily*): Certainly, why not, sir? . . . With the greatest pleasure. (*Aside.*) Now, bolder, bolder! Pull me through, Most Holy Mother!

HLESTAKOV: On the road, you know, I spent every kopek, on this and that. . . . Of course, I'll send it to you at once from my country home.

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: Please, sir, the idea! It's honor enough without repayment. . . . Of course, in my poor, weak way, by zeal and diligent service of the authorities . . . I shall always strive to deserve . . . (*He rises from his chair and draws himself up to an attitude of attention.*) I won't venture to disturb you longer by my presence. Have you no orders for me?

HLESTAKOV: What sort of orders?

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: I considered that you might have some orders for the local District Court.

HLESTAKOV: What for? I haven't any need of it at present; no, there's nothing. Thank you very much.

AMMOS FEDOROVICH (*bowing and going out, aside*): The town is ours!

HLESTAKOV (*when alone*): The Judge is a good fellow!

SCENE IV

HLESTAKOV *and the POSTMASTER, who, clad in his uniform, stands at attention, hand on sword*

POSTMASTER: I have the honor to introduce myself: Postmaster and Court Councilor Shpekin.

HLESTAKOV: Ah, do come in! I'm very fond of pleasant society. Be seated. I suppose you live here all the time?

POSTMASTER: Just so, sir.

HLESTAKOV: I like this little town. Of course, it's not very populous; but what of that? It's not the capital. It's not the capital, is it?

POSTMASTER: That's perfectly true.

HLESTAKOV: You find *bong tong* only in the capital, where there are no provincial geese. What's your opinion: isn't that right?

POSTMASTER: Quite right, sir. (*Aside.*) I see he's not a bit haughty: he asks about everything.

HLESTAKOV: You'll have to admit, I suppose, that it's possible to live happily even in a small town?

POSTMASTER: Just so, sir.

HLESTAKOV: In my opinion all one needs is to be respected and sincerely liked—isn't that right?

POSTMASTER: Absolutely right.

HLESTAKOV: I confess I'm glad that you're of my opinion. Of course they call me peculiar, but that's the kind of disposition I have. (*Looking into the POSTMASTER's eyes and speaking to himself.*) Why not ask this postmaster for a loan? (*Aloud.*) A strange sort of thing has happened to me: I got entirely cleaned out on the road. Couldn't you lend me three hundred rubles?

POSTMASTER: Why, certainly; I'd consider it the greatest pleasure. Here you are, sir. I'm heart and soul at your service.

HLESTAKOV: I'm much obliged. I confess I hate like hell to deny myself anything when traveling; and why should I? How does that strike you?

POSTMASTER: Just so, sir.

(*He rises and stands at attention, hand on sword.*)

I won't venture to disturb you any longer by my presence. . . . Have you perchance some remarks to make upon the management of the post office?

HLESTAKOV: No, nothing.

(*The POSTMASTER bows and goes out.*)

HLESTAKOV (*lighting a cigar*): The Postmaster, it seems to me, is also a nice fellow; at any rate, he's obliging. I like such people.

SCENE V

HLESTAKOV and LUKA LUKICH, who is almost pushed through the door. Behind him a voice says, half aloud, "What are you afraid of?"

LUKA LUKICH (*drawing himself up in trepidation and holding tight to his sword*): I have the honor to introduce myself: Superintendent of Schools and Titular Councilor Hlopov.

HLESTAKOV: Oh, pleased to meet you. Sit down, sit down. Have a cigar? (*Handing him a cigar.*)

LUKA LUKICH (*undecidedly, to himself*): Well, I declare! I didn't expect this. Shall I take it or not?

HLESTAKOV: Go ahead, take it; that's a good cigar. Of course it's not like those you get in Petersburg. There, my dear man, I used to smoke little cigars at twenty-five rubles the hundred—they simply make you want to kiss your hand after smoking. Here's a candle; have a light! (*He holds out a candle to him.*)

(LUKA LUKICH *tries to light his cigar and trembles all over.*)

HLESTAKOV: But that's the wrong end!

LUKA LUKICH (*dropping the cigar in his fright, spitting, and waving his hand; aside*): Devil take everything! My damned timidity has ruined me!

HLESTAKOV: Well, I see you don't care for cigars. I confess they're my weakness. Also, where the fair sex is concerned, I simply can't be indifferent. How about you? Which do you like better, brunettes or blondes?

(LUKA LUKICH *finds himself in utter bewilderment as to what to say.*)

HLESTAKOV: No, tell me frankly which: brunettes or blondes?

LUKA LUKICH: I don't venture to judge.

HLESTAKOV: No, no, now, don't offer excuses! I wish positively to find out your taste.

LUKA LUKICH: I venture to inform you . . . (*Aside.*) Well, I myself don't know what I'm saying.

HLESTAKOV: Ah, ha! You don't want to say! I believe some little brunette has got you into a slight embarrassment. Admit it now: hasn't she?

(LUKA LUKICH *remains silent.*)

HLESTAKOV: Ah, ha! You blushed! You see! You see! Why don't you talk?

LUKA LUKICH: I got scared, your Hon— . . . Excel— . . . Gra— . . . (*Aside.*) My damned tongue has betrayed me!

HLESTAKOV: Got scared? Well, there is something in my eyes that inspires timidity. At least I know there's not a woman who can hold out against them, is there?

LUKA LUKICH: Quite right, sir.

HLESTAKOV: A very strange thing has happened to me: on the road I got cleaned out. Couldn't you lend me three hundred rubles?

LUKA LUKICH (*to himself, clutching at his pocket*): What a fix if I haven't got it! I have! I have! (*He produces and tremblingly hands over the notes.*)

HLESTAKOV: Thanks ever so much.

LUKA LUKICH (*drawing himself up, hand on sword*): I won't venture to disturb you longer by my presence.

HLESTAKOV: Good-by.

LUKA LUKICH (*hurries out almost running, speaking aside*): Well, thank God! Here's hoping he won't peep in on the classes!

SCENE VI

HLESTAKOV and ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH, *who draws himself up, hand on sword*

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: I have the honor to present myself: the Supervisor of Charitable Institutions, Court Councilor Zemlyanika.

HLESTAKOV: How do you do? Pray be seated.

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: I had the honor of escorting you, and of receiving you personally in the charitable institutions entrusted to my care.

HLESTAKOV: Ah, yes, I remember. You treated me to a very good lunch.

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: I'm happy to do my best in the service of my country.

HLESTAKOV: I like good cooking; I admit it's my weakness. . . . Tell me, please, weren't you a little shorter in height yesterday? It seems so to me.

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: It may well be. (*A brief silence.*) I may say that I spare nothing, and zealously fulfill my duties. (*He draws his chair nearer and speaks in a lower voice.*) The Postmaster here does absolutely nothing: all the business is greatly neglected: the mail is kept back—you can find it out for yourself. The Judge also, who was here before I came, does nothing but course hares; he keeps dogs

in the court rooms, and his behavior, if I may admit it in your presence—of course, for the good of my country, I must do it, although he's both a relative and a friend of mine—his behavior is most reprehensible. There's a certain landowner here named Dobchinsky, whom you have seen; and no sooner does this Dobchinsky go out of his house somewhere, than the Judge goes over to sit with his wife, and I'm ready to swear . . . And you have only to look at the children: there's not one that looks like Dobchinsky, but every one of them, even the little girl, is the spit 'n image of the Judge.

HLESTAKOV: You don't say so! I never thought of it.

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: Then there's the Superintendent of Schools. . . . I don't know how the authorities could entrust him with such a responsibility: he's worse than a Jacobin, and he inspires in the youth such radical principles that it's hard even to express them. Don't you want me to put all this on paper for you?

HLESTAKOV: Yes, put it on paper. I'd be much pleased. You know, when I'm bored I like to read over something amusing. . . . What is your name? I've quite forgotten.

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: Zemlyanika.

HLESTAKOV: Ah, yes, Zemlyanika. And tell me, please, have you any children?

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: I should say so, sir! Five of them, two grown up.

HLESTAKOV: You don't say! Grown up! And what are they? . . . How do you . . . ?

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: Do you wish to ask what their names are?

HLESTAKOV: Yes, what are their names?

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: Nikolay, Ivan, Elizaveta, Marya, and Perepetuya.

HLESTAKOV: That's nice.

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: I won't venture to disturb you any longer by my presence, depriving you of time dedicated to your sacred duties. . . . *(He bows and is about to go out.)*

HLESTAKOV *(accompanying him)*: No, that's all right. That was all very funny, what you were telling me. Come and see me again. I enjoy it so much. *(He returns, and opening the door, calls after him.)* Hey, you! What's your name? I keep forgetting your name.

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: Artemy Filippovich.

HLESTAKOV: Do me a favor, Artemy Filippovich! A queer thing has happened to me: I got quite cleaned out on the road. Haven't you some money you could lend me—say four hundred rubles?

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: Yes.

HLESTAKOV: Well, how opportune! I thank you heartily.

SCENE VII

HLESTAKOV, BOBCHINSKY, and DOBCHINSKY

BOBCHINSKY: I have the honor to introduce myself: Petr Ivanovich Bobchinsky, a resident of this town.

DOBCHINSKY: Petr Ivanovich Dobchinsky, a landowner.

HLESTAKOV: Ah, yes, I've seen you before. I think you had a fall: well, how's your nose?

BOBCHINSKY: First rate! Don't feel any anxiety, please; it's quite well and dried up.

HLESTAKOV: I'm glad it's healed. I'm very glad. . . . (*Suddenly and abruptly.*) Have you any money on you?

DOBCHINSKY: What do you mean, money?

HLESTAKOV: Lend me a thousand rubles.

BOBCHINSKY: Good Lord, I haven't such a sum. But haven't you, Petr Ivanovich?

DOBCHINSKY: I haven't it about me, because my money, if you care to know, has been deposited with the Charitable Board.*

HLESTAKOV: Well, if you haven't a thousand, a hundred will do.

BOBCHINSKY (*rummaging in his pockets*): Haven't you a hundred rubles, Petr Ivanovich? I have only forty altogether, in notes.

DOBCHINSKY (*looking in his bill-fold*): Twenty-five rubles in all.

BOBCHINSKY: Just take a better look, Petr Ivanovich. I know there's a hole in your right-hand pocket, and really, something may have fallen through.

DOBCHINSKY: No, really, there's nothing in the hole.

HLESTAKOV: Well, it's all the same. I just asked. Good: sixty-five rubles will do. . . . That's all right. (*He takes the money.*)

DOBCHINSKY: I venture to ask your help about a very delicate matter.

HLESTAKOV: What is it?

DOBCHINSKY: It's a thing of very great delicacy, sir: my eldest son, you see, was born before my marriage. . . .

HLESTAKOV: Yes?

DOBCHINSKY: Of course, that's only so to speak, sir, because he was born absolutely the same as if in wedlock; and I afterwards fixed everything up properly by the lawful bonds of matrimony, sir. And so, you see, I now want him to be my son entirely, that is, legally, sir, and to bear my name, Dobchinsky, sir.

HLESTAKOV: Very good, let him; that's all right.

DOBCHINSKY: I shouldn't have troubled you, but I'm sorry for the boy, who has such talents. He fills us with the greatest hopes: he can

* This had charge of beggars, orphans, invalids, the insane.

repeat different poems by heart; and if he happens to get hold of a pocket knife, he makes a little cab right off, as skillfully as a juggler, sir. Petr Ivanovich here knows all about it.

BOBCHINSKY: Yes, he has great talents.

HLESTAKOV: Very good, very good. I'll see about it. . . . I'll speak to . . . I have hopes . . . that can all be done; yes, yes. . . . (*Turning to BOBCHINSKY.*) Haven't you something to say to me?

BOBCHINSKY: Why, yes, I have a very humble petition.

HLESTAKOV: Well, what about?

BOBCHINSKY: I humbly beg you, when you return to Petersburg, to say to all those various grandees, senators, and admirals, "Your Grace," or, "Your Excellency, there lives in such-and-such a town a certain Petr Ivanovich Bobchinsky." Just tell them that there is such a person as Petr Ivanovich Bobchinsky.

HLESTAKOV: Very well.

BOBCHINSKY: And likewise, if you should meet the tsar, just say to him, "Your Imperial Majesty, in such-and-such a town there lives a certain Petr Ivanovich Bobchinsky."

HLESTAKOV: Very well.

BOBCHINSKY: Excuse me for troubling you with my presence.

BOBCHINSKY: Excuse me for troubling you with my presence.

HLESTAKOV: That's all right! That's all right! It was a pleasure. (*He shows them out.*)

SCENE VIII

HLESTAKOV, *alone*

HLESTAKOV: There are a good many functionaries here. And, by the way, it strikes me that they take me for an important government official. I really threw dust in their eyes yesterday. What foolishness! I believe I'll write all about it to Tryapichkin in Petersburg; he'll write a little satire and take them off first-rate. Hey, Osip! Bring me paper and ink. (*OSIP glances in at the door, saying, "Right away."*) And if Tryapichkin ever gets his tooth into anybody, let that man look out! He won't spare his own father for the sake of a lampoon, and he likes money, too. However, these officials are good fellows; it's a great point in their favor that they lent me money. I might as well see how much I've got. Here's three hundred from the Judge; three hundred from the Postmaster, six hundred, seven hundred, eight hundred. . . . What a greasy note! Eight hundred, nine hundred! Oho! more than a thousand! . . . Now, then, captain, just let me get at you now! We'll see who's who!

SCENE IX

HLESTAKOV, and OSIP with ink and paper

HLESTAKOV: Well, you blockhead, do you see how they receive and entertain me? (*He begins to write.*)

OSIP: Yes, thank God! Only do you want me to tell you something, Ivan Alexandrovich?

HLESTAKOV: What?

OSIP: Get away from here! By Heaven, it's time!

HLESTAKOV (*writing*): What nonsense! Why?

OSIP: Because. Deuce take 'em all! We've bummed two days here, and that's enough. Why tie up with 'em any longer? Spit on 'em! Before you know it some one else may arrive. . . . Yes, Ivan Alexandrovich, by Heavens! There are some splendid horses here—they'd give us a fine ride.

HLESTAKOV (*writing*): No, I'd like to stay here a little longer. Wait till to-morrow.

OSIP: But why to-morrow? Good God, let's skip, Ivan Alexandrovich! Although it's a great honor for you, all the same you know that we'd better be off quick; they've really taken you for some one else. . . . And your dad will be peeved because you've dawdled so long. Really, we'd have a grand ride! They'd furnish you tiptop horses here.

HLESTAKOV (*writing*): Well, all right. But first take this letter and get an order for post horses. And see to it that they're good horses! Tell the drivers that I'll give them a ruble apiece if they'll bowl along as if I were a special courier and sing songs! (*He continues writing.*) I imagine Tryapichkin will die laughing. . . .

OSIP: I'll send the letter by the house servant, sir; but I'd better attend to our packing to save time.

HLESTAKOV (*writing*): All right, only bring me a candle.

OSIP (*goes out and speaks behind the scene*): Hey, listen, my boy! Take this letter to the post office and tell the Postmaster to frank it; and have them send my master their best troika of post horses; tell 'em my master won't be paying the fee, because it's at the government's expense. And tell 'em to look lively or the master'll be angry. Wait, the letter isn't ready yet.

HLESTAKOV (*continuing to write*): I'm curious to know whether he lives on Post Office Street or Gorokhovaya Street. He likes to change his lodgings frequently without paying up. I'll take a chance on addressing him at Post Office Street. (*He folds up the letter and addresses it.*)

(OSIP brings in a candle. HLESTAKOV seals the letter. At the same time the voice of DERZHIMORDA is heard outside.)

DERZHIMORDA: Where're you going, whiskers? I tell you I can't admit anybody.

HLESTAKOV (*handing OSIP the letter*): There, take it away.

Voices of MERCHANTS: Let us in, please! You can't refuse; we've come on business.

DERZHIMORDA: Go away! Go away! He's not receiving; he's asleep. (*The noise increases.*)

HLESTAKOV: What's going on there, Osip? Go see what the noise is about.

OSIP (*looking out of the window*): Some merchants want to come in, but the policemen won't let 'em. They're waving some papers; they really want to see you.

HLESTAKOV (*going to the window*): What do you want, my good men?

Voices of MERCHANTS: We appeal to your kindness. Give orders to receive our petitions, your Honor.

HLESTAKOV: Let 'em in, let 'em in! Let 'em come. Osip, tell 'em to come in. (*OSIP goes out.*)

HLESTAKOV (*accepts the petitions through the window, unrolls one of them and reads*): "To his Honorable Excellency the Minister of Finance from the merchant Abdulin." . . . What the devil! There's no such rank!

SCENE X

HLESTAKOV, and the MERCHANTS, who carry a basket of wine and loaf sugar

HLESTAKOV: What do you want, my good men?

MERCHANTS: We humbly implore your favor.

HLESTAKOV: But what do you want?

MERCHANTS: Don't ruin us, sir! We are suffering insults for no cause at all.

HLESTAKOV: From whom?

ONE OF THE MERCHANTS: All from the chief of police of this town. There never was such a Chief of Police, your Honor. He invents such insults as are beyond description. He has ruined us with billeting, until we want to hang ourselves. And his behavior is simply awful. He'll seize a man by the beard and say, "Ha, you Tatar!" By Heaven, he does! It isn't as though we hadn't shown him respect; we always do the regular thing, giving him cloth for his

dear wife's clothes and his daughter's—we don't object to that. But, bless you, that's not enough for him; oh, no! He walks into the shop and takes anything he can lay his hands on. He'll see a piece of cloth and say, "Hey, my dear fellow, that's a fine piece of cloth; just send it over to me." Well, you take it over—and there's pretty close to forty yards in the piece.

HLESTAKOV: Is it possible? Why, what a swindler he is!

MERCHANTS: By Heaven, nobody can remember such a chief of police. You have to hide everything in the shop when you catch sight of him. And that's not saying that he takes only delicacies; oh, no! Dried prunes that have been lying in the barrel seven years and my own clerks wouldn't eat, he'll put away by the pocketful. His name day's St. Anthony's,* and on that day we take him seems like everything he needs; but no, we've got to keep it up; he says St. Onufry's his name day too. What can we do? We bring him stuff on St. Onufry's also.

HLESTAKOV: He's a regular highwayman!

MERCHANT: I'll say! And just try to say no to him, and he'll quarter a whole regiment on you. And if you object, he'll have the doors locked on you. "I'm not going to subject you to corporal punishment," he says, "or put you to the torture—that's forbidden by law," he says; "but you're going to eat salted herrings, my man." †

HLESTAKOV: Oh, what a swindler! Why, he ought to be sent to Siberia!

MERCHANTS: We don't care where your Honor packs him off to; any place'll do so long as it's far from us. Don't scorn our bread and salt, father: we beg to present you with this loaf sugar and this basket of wine.

HLESTAKOV: No, don't think of such a thing; I accept absolutely no bribes. But, for instance, if you should propose to lend me three hundred rubles—well, that would be another matter: I can accept loans.

MERCHANTS: Please do, your Honor! (*Taking out money.*) But why three hundred? You had better take five; only help us!

HLESTAKOV: Thanks. I have nothing to say against a loan; I'll take it.

MERCHANTS (*handing him the money on a silver tray*): And please take the tray with it.

HLESTAKOV: Well, you can throw the tray in.

MERCHANTS (*bowing*): And for once you might take the sugar.

* In Russia the day of the saint for whom a person is named is a family holiday.

† "To produce excessive thirst. This indirect form of torture was employed, to extort confession, by the secret police."—Sykes.

HLESTAKOV: Oh, no, I never take any bribes. . . .

OSIP: Your Honor, why not take it? Do! Everything comes in good on the road. Just hand over the sugar and the sack. Give us everything; it'll all come in useful. What's that—a rope? Give us the rope, too; a rope is useful in traveling; the wagon may break down or something, and you'll have to tie it up.

MERCHANTS: Just do us the favor, your Grace! If you don't help us out as we ask you to, we shan't know what to do: we might as well hang ourselves.

HLESTAKOV: Without fail! Without fail! I'll do my best. (*The merchants go out.*)

A WOMAN'S VOICE (*outside*): No, don't you dare refuse to admit me! I'll complain to him himself! Stop shoving so hard!

HLESTAKOV: Who's there? (*Going to the window.*) What's the matter, my good woman?

VOICES OF TWO WOMEN: We beseech your favor, sir! Please hear us, your Honor!

HLESTAKOV (*out of the window*): Let her in.

SCENE XI

HLESTAKOV, the LOCKSMITH'S WIFE, and the SERGEANT'S WIDOW

LOCKSMITH'S WIFE (*bowing down to his feet*): I implore your favor. . . .

SERGEANT'S WIDOW: I implore your favor. . . .

HLESTAKOV: Who are you, my good women?

SERGEANT'S WIDOW: I'm the widow of Sergeant Ivanov.

LOCKSMITH'S WIFE: I'm the wife of a locksmith of the town, Fevronya Petrova Poshlepkin, sir.

HLESTAKOV: Wait; speak one at a time. What do you want?

LOCKSMITH'S WIFE: I implore your aid against the Chief of Police! May God send him every evil! May his children, and he, the swindler, and his uncles and his aunts, prosper in nothing they ever do!

HLESTAKOV: Why?

LOCKSMITH'S WIFE: He sent my husband away as a soldier, and it wasn't our turn, the scoundrel! And it's against the law, too, he being a married man.

HLESTAKOV: How could he do that?

LOCKSMITH'S WIFE: He did it, the scoundrel, he did it! May God smite him in this world and the next! May every misfortune visit him and his aunt, too, if he has one, and if his father's living, the rascal, may he croak or choke himself forever—such a scoundrel he is! He

ought to have taken the tailor's son, who's a drunkard anyway; but his parents made him a handsome present; so he jumped on the son of Mrs. Panteleyev, the shopkeeper; but Mrs. Panteleyev sent his wife three pieces of cloth, and so he came to me. "What good's your husband to you?" says he. "He's no use to you." As if I didn't know whether he's any use or not; that's my business—the scoundrel! "He's a thief," says he; "although he hasn't stolen anything yet, it's all the same," he says; "he will; and anyway he'll be sent as a recruit next year." How can I manage without my husband—the scoundrel! I'm a weak woman, and you're a villain! May none of your relatives ever see the light of God! And if you have a mother-in-law, may she—!

HLESTAKOV: All right, all right. (*He shows the old woman out. Then to the other woman.*) And you, now?

LOCKSMITH'S WIFE (*going*): Don't forget, honored sir! Be merciful to me!

SERGEANT'S WIDOW: I've come to complain against the Chief of Police, sir.

HLESTAKOV: Well, what about? Put it in a few words.

SERGEANT'S WIDOW: He beat me up, sir!

HLESTAKOV: How?

SERGEANT'S WIDOW: By mistake, your Honor! Some of our peasant women were fighting in the market, but the police didn't get there soon enough, so they nabbed me, and reported me: I couldn't sit down for two days.

HLESTAKOV: Well, what's to be done about it, now?

SERGEANT'S WIDOW: Of course, there's nothing to be done now. But you can make him pay damages for making the mistake. I can't turn my back on my own luck, and the money would help me a lot just now.

HLESTAKOV: Well, well, run along, run along; I'll see to it. (*Several hands containing petitions are thrust through the window.*) What next? (*Approaching the window.*) I don't want them! I don't want them! There's no use! There's no use! (*Going away.*) They make me tired, deuce take 'em! Don't let 'em in, Osip!

OSIP (*shouting out the window*): Go away, go away! He hasn't time now! Come back to-morrow!

(*The door opens and there appears a strange figure in a frieze overcoat, unshaven, with a swollen lip and bandaged cheek; behind him several others appear in perspective.*)

OSIP: Get out, get out! Where'd you come from?

(*He gives the first one a push in the belly and forces his own way out into the passage with him, slamming the door behind him.*)

SCENE XII

HLESTAKOV, and MARYA ANTONOVNA

MARYA ANTONOVNA: Oh!

HLESTAKOV: What are you afraid of, young lady?

MARYA ANTONOVNA: No, I wasn't frightened.

HLESTAKOV (*posing*): It is most gratifying to me, young lady, that you should take me for a man who . . . May I be so bold as to ask you where you were going?

MARYA ANTONOVNA: Well, really, I wasn't going anywhere.

HLESTAKOV: And why weren't you, if I may ask?

MARYA ANTONOVNA: I thought mamma might be here. . . .

HLESTAKOV: No, I'd like to know why you weren't going anywhere.

MARYA ANTONOVNA: I've disturbed you. You were engaged with important matters.

HLESTAKOV (*posing*): Your eyes are more important than mere business. . . . You couldn't possibly disturb me, not in any manner whatsoever; on the contrary, you only bring me pleasure.

MARYA ANTONOVNA: You're talking in Petersburg style.

HLESTAKOV: To such a beautiful creature as you. Dare I be so happy as to offer you a chair? But no, you need, not a chair but a throne.

MARYA ANTONOVNA: Really, I don't know . . . I think I ought to be going. (*She sits down.*)

HLESTAKOV: What a beautiful fichu you have on!

MARYA ANTONOVNA: You men are flatterers; you just want to laugh at us provincials.

HLESTAKOV: How I should like to be your fichu, young lady, that I might embrace your lily-white neck.

MARYA ANTONOVNA: I'm sure I don't know what you're talking about: a little fichu. . . . What strange weather we're having to-day!

HLESTAKOV: But your lips, young lady, are better than any kind of weather!

MARYA ANTONOVNA: You keep talking like that! . . . I'd better ask you to write me some verses in my autograph album, as a souvenir. You surely know a lot of them.

HLESTAKOV: For your sake, young lady, I'll do anything you want. Command me, what sort of verses do you wish?

MARYA ANTONOVNA: Oh, any kind . . . such as . . . good ones . . . and new.

HLESTAKOV: But what are verses! I know a lot of them.

MARYA ANTONOVNA: Just say over the kind you're going to write for me.

HLESTAKOV: Why say them? I know them without doing that.

MARYA ANTONOVNA: I'm so fond of poetry.

HLESTAKOV: Well, I know a lot of different poems. For instance, I might write this for you:

O man, who in thine hour of grief
Against thy God in vain complainest. . . . *

And there are others. . . . I can't recall them now; however, that's all right. Instead I had better present you with my love, which your eyes have . . . (*Moving his chair nearer.*)

MARYA ANTONOVNA: Love! I don't understand love! . . . I have never known what love is. . . . (*She moves her chair away.*)

HLESTAKOV: Why do you move your chair away? It would be better for us to sit close together.

MARYA ANTONOVNA (*moving away*): Why close together? We're as well off at a distance.

HLESTAKOV (*moving nearer*): Why at a distance? We're as well off nearer.

MARYA ANTONOVNA (*moving away*): But why is that?

HLESTAKOV (*moving nearer*): It just seems to you that we're close; but you ought to imagine we're far apart. How happy I should be, young lady, if I could only hold you in my embrace.

MARYA ANTONOVNA (*looking out the window*): I wonder what that was that flew by. Was it a magpie or some other bird?

HLESTAKOV (*kissing her shoulder and looking out the window*): That was a magpie.

MARYA ANTONOVNA (*rising in indignation*): No, this is too much! . . . Such impudence! . . .

HLESTAKOV (*detaining her*): Forgive me, young lady, I did it from love, only from love.

MARYA ANTONOVNA: You consider me only a common provincial girl. . . . (*She tries to get away.*)

HLESTAKOV (*continues to detain her*): From love, truly, only from love. I was only joking, Marya Antonovna; don't be angry. I'm ready to beg forgiveness on my knees. (*He falls upon his knees.*) Forgive me, please forgive me! You see, I'm on my knees.

* The opening lines of an ode by Lomonosov (1708?-1765). Hlestakov recalls a scrap of an old-fashioned poet that he learned at school! (Adapted from Sykes.)

SCENE XIII

The same and ANNA ANDREYEVNA

ANNA ANDREYEVNA (*seeing HLESTAKOV on his knees*): Oh, what a scene!

HLESTAKOV (*rising*): Oh, the deuce!

ANNA ANDREYEVNA (*to her daughter*): What does this mean, young lady? What sort of behavior is this?

MARYA ANTONOVNA: Mamma, I . . .

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Go away at once, do you hear? Go away, go away! Don't you dare show yourself before my eyes. (*MARYA ANTONOVNA goes out in tears.*) Pardon me, but I confess I was carried away by astonishment. . . .

HLESTAKOV (*aside*): She's also rather appetizing, not half bad-looking. (*Throwing himself upon his knees.*) Madam, you see, I am consumed with love.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: What, on your knees? Oh, please get up. The floor is anything but clean.

HLESTAKOV: No, upon my knees, absolutely upon my knees, I wish to know my fate. Is it life or death?

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: I beg your pardon, but I still don't entirely understand your words. If I am not mistaken, you are declaring your sentiments regarding my daughter.

HLESTAKOV: No, I am in love with you. My life hangs by a hair. If you do not crown my constant love, then I am unworthy of earthly existence. With flames in my bosom I beseech your hand.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Permit me to remark that I am—well, as they say . . . married.

HLESTAKOV: That's nothing! In love that makes no difference. Even Karamzin says, "The laws condemn it."* We shall flee to the shade of the streams! . . . Your hand, I ask your hand.

SCENE XIV

The same and MARYA ANTONOVNA, who comes in running

MARYA ANTONOVNA: Mamma, papa says for you to . . . (*Seeing HLESTAKOV on his knees, and exclaiming.*) Oh, what a scene!

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Well, what's the matter with you! What did you come in for? What flightiness! She runs in like a cat in a fit!

*"Quoted from some verses in the romance, *Bornholm Island*, by Karamzin (1766-1826)."—Sykes.

Well, what have you found that's so surprising? What have you thought up? Really, you act like a three-year-old child. No one in the world would ever think she was eighteen years old. I don't know when you'll have any more sense, or when you'll behave like a well-brought-up girl, or when you'll know what good principles and propriety are.

MARYA ANTONOVNA (*through her tears*): Really, mamma, I didn't know . . .

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: You always have wheels in your head; you pattern after Lyapkin-Tyapkin's daughters! Much good it does you to imitate them! You needn't copy them. There are other models for you—you have your mother, for example. That's the example you ought to follow!

HLESTAKOV (*seizing the daughter's hand*): Anna Andreyevna, do not oppose our felicity, bless our constant love!

ANNA ANDREYEVNA (*astonished*): And so you're in love with *her*?

HLESTAKOV: Decide! Is it life or death?

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: There, you see, you little fool, you see: all on your account, you rubbish, our guest was on his knees; and you had to run in like a chicken with its head off. I really ought to refuse my consent: you're unworthy such good fortune.

MARYA ANTONOVNA: I won't do it again, mamma; really, I won't do it again.

SCENE XV

The same and the CHIEF OF POLICE, who enters out of breath

CHIEF OF POLICE: Your Excellency, don't ruin me, don't ruin me!
HLESTAKOV: What's the matter?

CHIEF OF POLICE: The merchants have been complaining to your Excellency. I assure you on my honor that not half of what they say is true. They're the ones who cheat and overreach the people. The sergeant's widow lied to you, saying I'd flogged her; she's lying, by God, she's lying! She flogged herself.

HLESTAKOV: Damn the sergeant's widow; I've nothing to do with her!

CHIEF OF POLICE: Don't believe it, don't believe it! . . . They're all liars! Not even a baby would believe them. They're known for liars all over town. And so far as swindling goes, I venture to inform you that they are swindlers such as the earth has never produced before.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Do you know the honor that Ivan Alexandrovich has done us? He is asking for our daughter's hand.

CHIEF OF POLICE: What in the world! . . . You've gone crazy, my dear! Don't be angry, your Excellency; she's a little bit off, and her mother was the same.

HLESTAKOV: But I actually am asking for her hand. I'm in love.

CHIEF OF POLICE: I can't believe it, your Excellency!

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: But when you're told so!

HLESTAKOV: I'm not joking you. . . . I may go mad from love.

CHIEF OF POLICE: I don't dare believe it; I'm unworthy of such an honor.

HLESTAKOV: Yes, if you do not agree to give me Marya Antonovna's hand, then I'm ready to do the devil knows what. . . .

CHIEF OF POLICE: I can't believe it! Your Excellency is having his joke!

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Oh, what a blockhead you are! When he's explaining it to you?

CHIEF OF POLICE: I can't believe it!

HLESTAKOV: Give her, give her to me! I'm a desperate man, ready for anything: when I shoot myself, you'll be put on trial!

CHIEF OF POLICE: Oh, my God! I'm really not to blame, in intention or in fact! Please don't be angry! Just act as your Honor wishes! My poor head, really . . . I don't know myself what's going on. I've made a bigger blockhead of myself than ever.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Well, give 'em your blessing!

(HLESTAKOV approaches him with MARYA ANTONOVNA.)

CHIEF OF POLICE: May God bless you! It's not my fault! (HLESTAKOV kisses MARYA ANTONOVNA. The CHIEF OF POLICE watches them.) What the devil! They really are! (*Wiping his eyes.*) They're kissing! Holy Saints, they're kissing! They're actually engaged! (*Shouting and prancing with joy.*) Hey, Anton! Hey, Anton! Aha, Police Chief! That's the way it's turned out!

SCENE XVI

The same and OSIP

OSIP: The horses are ready.

HLESTAKOV: Oh, all right. . . . In a minute.

CHIEF OF POLICE: What, sir? Are you leaving?

HLESTAKOV: Yes, I am.

CHIEF OF POLICE: But when? . . . That is . . . you hinted something about a wedding, didn't you?

HLESTAKOV: Oh, as to that . . . it's only for a minute—just a day with my uncle. He's a rich old man—and to-morrow I'll be back.

CHIEF OF POLICE: We dare not detain you and we hope for your prosperous return.

HLESTAKOV: Why, of course, of course, I'll be right back. Good-by, my love. . . . No, I simply cannot express myself! Good-by, my darling! (*He kisses her hand.*)

CHIEF OF POLICE: But don't you need anything for traveling? You were somewhat short of money, weren't you?

HLESTAKOV: Oh, no, what for? (*Upon reflection.*) However, if you wish.

CHIEF OF POLICE: How much would you like?

HLESTAKOV: Well, you gave me two hundred, that is, not two hundred, but four—I don't want to profit by your mistake—so perhaps you'd be willing to let me have as much again, to make an even eight hundred.

CHIEF OF POLICE: At once! (*He takes it from his pocketbook.*) Fortunately I have it in brand-new bills.

HLESTAKOV: Ah, yes. (*He takes the notes and looks at them.*) That's fine. They say that new notes bring good luck.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Just so, sir.

HLESTAKOV: Good-by, Anton Antonovich! I'm much obliged for your hospitality. I confess from the bottom of my heart, I've never had such a kind reception. Good-by, Anna Andreyevna! Good-by, my darling Marya Antonovna! (*They go out.*)

(*Voices behind the scenes.*)

HLESTAKOV's *Voice*: Good-by, Marya Antonovna, my soul's angel!

Voice of the CHIEF OF POLICE: What's this? You're going by the public post?

HLESTAKOV's *Voice*: Yes, I'm used to it. Springs give me the headache.

DRIVER's *Voice*: Whoa!

Voice of the CHIEF OF POLICE: Then at least let me spread something on the seat: a rug, for instance. Won't you let me give you a little rug?

HLESTAKOV's *Voice*: No, what for? That's needless; still, you might let them bring a rug.

Voice of the CHIEF OF POLICE: Hey, Avdotya! Run to the store-room and bring out the best rug—the Persian one with the blue ground. Hurry!

DRIVER's *Voice*: Whoa!

Voice of the CHIEF OF POLICE: When may we expect you back?

HLESTAKOV's *Voice*: To-morrow or the day after.

OSIP's *Voice*: Ah, is that the rug? Well, give it here; fold it like this. Now put some hay on this side.

DRIVER'S *Voice*: Whoa!

OSIP'S *Voice*: Here on this side! Here! That'll do! Good! That'll be fine. (*Slapping his hand on the rug.*) Now, sit down, your Honor!

HLESTAKOV'S *Voice*: Good-by, Anton Antonovich!

VOICE OF THE CHIEF OF POLICE: Good-by, your Excellency!

WOMEN'S *Voices*: Good-by, Ivan Alexandrovich!

HLESTAKOV'S *Voice*: Good-by, mamma!

DRIVER'S *Voice*: Giddap, my beauties! (*The harness bells jingle; the curtain falls.*)

ACT V

The same room

SCENE I

The CHIEF OF POLICE, ANNA ANDREYEVNA, and MARYA ANTONOVNA

CHIEF OF POLICE: Well, Anna Andreyevna, what about it? Would you ever have expected it? What a rich prize, hang it all! Now, admit it candidly: you never even dreamed of such luck! From being a mere police chief's wife suddenly to . . . oh, the deuce! . . . to make connections with such a devil as this!

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Not at all; I knew it all the time. It seems wonderful to you, because you're an ordinary man and have never seen decent people.

CHIEF OF POLICE: I'm a decent man myself, dear. On the other hand, really, when you think of it, Anna Andreyevna, what fine birds you and I have become! Ha, Anna Andreyevna? We'll fly high, deuce take it! Just wait, now I'll pepper those guys for presenting petitions and denunciations! Hey, who's there? (*A policeman comes in.*) Oh, it's you, Ivan Karpovich. Call the merchants in, my boy. I'll give it to them, the rascals! To complain about *me*! Nothing but a damned bunch of Jews! Just wait, sweethearts! Up to date I've merely warmed your breeches, but now I'll tan your whole hides! Write down the name of every man who came to peach on me, and, above all, the scribblers who fixed up their petitions for them. And you can announce so they'll all know it, what an honor God has bestowed on the Chief of Police, who is marrying his daughter to no ordinary man, but to one whose like can't be found on earth, a man who can do everything, everything, everything! Announce it so they'll all know it. Shout it to the whole population! Ring the bells, dammit! This is a regular holiday. (*The policeman goes out.*) That's the way, Anna

Andreyevna, huh? What'll we do now, where shall we live: here or in Petersburg?

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: In Petersburg, of course. How could we stay here!

CHIEF OF POLICE: Well, if it's to be Petersburg, so be it; but it wouldn't be so bad here. And I suppose the police business may go to hell, huh, Anna Andreyevna?

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Of course; what's a police job!

CHIEF OF POLICE: Don't you think, Anna Andreyevna, I may now land a swell title? He's chummy with all the ministers and goes to the Palace, so he may get me promoted in time to a generalship. What do you think, Anna Andreyevna, may I get to be a general?

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Sure, of course you may.

CHIEF OF POLICE: It's damned nice to be a general! They hang decorations across your breast! Which ribbon is better, Anna Andreyevna, the red or the blue?

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Of course the blue is best.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Eh? So that's what you fancy. Well, the red's nice, too. Why do I want to be a general? Because if it happens that you travel anywhere, messengers and adjutants gallop ahead everywhere, shouting, "Horses!" And at the posting stations they won't give any to any one else; all have to wait: all those titular councilors, captains, police chiefs—and you don't give a snap of your fingers. You dine somewhere at a governor's, and there a police chief has to stand! He, he, he! *(He laughs himself into a perspiration.)* That's what's so attractive, damn it!

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: You always like everything vulgar. You must remember that we've got to change our whole manner of living, that your acquaintances won't be like the dog fancier Judge with whom you course hares, or like Zemlyanika; on the contrary, your acquaintances will be from the most refined society, counts and swells. . . . Though I'm really scared on your account: you'll let slip occasionally some word that simply isn't heard in polite society.

CHIEF OF POLICE: What of it? A word doesn't hurt.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: It was all right while you were a police chief; but in Petersburg life will be quite different.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Yes; they say that there are two kinds of fish there, sea-eels and sparlings, which simply make your mouth water when you begin to eat.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: He's always thinking about fish! I want to be sure that our house is the swellest in the capital, and I want such an odor of ambergris in my drawing-room that there'll be no going into

it: you'll simply have to shut your eyes. (*She shuts her eyes and sniffs.*) Oh, how nice!

SCENE II

The same and the MERCHANTS

CHIEF OF POLICE: Ah, how are you, you flock of hawks!

MERCHANTS (*bowing*): We wish you good health, sir!

CHIEF OF POLICE: Well, darlings, how are you? How's trade, eh? What, you tea-swilling cloth-stretchers, you'll complain, will you? You arch-rascals, you dirty brutes, you swollen swindlers, you'll complain, will you? Well, did you get much? They thought they'd have me thrown in the jug! . . . Do you know, I'll swear by seven devils and one witch that . . .

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Oh, good Heavens, Antosha, what words you use!

CHIEF OF POLICE (*greatly displeased*): Words don't matter now. Do you know that that very official to whom you complained is marrying my daughter? Do you? What d'you say now? Now I'll fix you! . . . You deceive people. . . . You make a contract with the government and swindle it out of a hundred thousand by supplying rotten cloth, and then you donate twenty yards and expect to be rewarded for it! And if they found it out, you'd catch it! . . . He struts along, belly foremost: he's a merchant; nobody must touch him! "We don't give way even to the nobility," he says. As for a nobleman . . . Bah, you pigs' mugs! . . . A nobleman studies the sciences; and if they beat him at school, it's to some purpose, so that he'll learn something useful. But what about you? You begin with rascalities, and you're beaten by the master because you don't know how to cheat. While still little brats, before you know your Lord's Prayer, you give short measure; and when you've developed a belly and lined your pockets with money, how you do put on airs! Oh, you're wonders, I'll say! Because you empty sixteen samovars a day, you put on airs, do you? I spit on you and your conceit!

MERCHANTS (*bowing*): We're at fault, Anton Antonovich!

CHIEF OF POLICE: Complain, will you? But who helped you swindle when you built the bridge and charged twenty thousand for lumber when you didn't use a hundred rubles' worth? I helped you, you old billy goat!* Have you forgotten that? If I had peached on you for that, I could have sent you to Siberia. What d'you say, ha?

ONE OF THE MERCHANTS: God knows we're guilty, Anton Antono-

*"At the date of the play, only the lower classes wore beards."—Sykes.

vich! The devil misled us. We swear never to complain again. Demand any satisfaction you please, only don't be angry!

CHIEF OF POLICE: Don't be angry! And now you're wallowing at my feet. And why? Because I've got the upper hand; but if you had even the least advantage, you scum, you'd trample me in the very mud, and roll a log over me.

MERCHANTS (*bowing to his feet*): Don't ruin us, Anton Antonovich!

CHIEF OF POLICE: "Don't ruin us!" Now it's "Don't ruin us!" But what was it before? I could . . . (*Waving his hand.*) Well, God forgive you! That'll do! I'm not vindictive; only see that you look sharp from now on! I'm not marrying my daughter to any ordinary noble: let your congratulations be . . . d'you understand? Don't try to wriggle out of it with a chunk of dried sturgeon or a loaf of sugar. . . . Now, go to the devil! (*The MERCHANTS go out.*)

SCENE III

The same, AMMOS FEDOROVICH, ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH, and later RASTAKOVSKY

AMMOS FEDOROVICH (*still in the door*): Can I believe the rumors, Anton Antonovich? Has this unusual good luck really struck you?

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: I have the honor to congratulate you upon your unusual good fortune. I rejoiced with all my soul when I heard about it. (*He goes to kiss ANNA ANDREYEVNA's hand.*) Anna Andreyevna! (*He goes to kiss MARYA ANTONOVNA's hand.*) Marya Antonovna!

RASTKOVSKY (*entering*): I congratulate Anton Antonovich! May God prolong your life and that of the new pair, and give you a numerous posterity of grandchildren and great-grandchildren! Anna Andreyevna! (*Going to kiss her hand.*) Marya Antonovna! (*Going to kiss her hand.*)

SCENE IV

The same, KOROBKIN and his wife, and LYULYUKOV

KOROBKIN: I have the honor to congratulate Anton Antonovich! Anna Andreyevna! (*Going to kiss her hand.*) Marya Antonovna! (*Going to kiss her hand.*)

KOROBKIN'S WIFE: I congratulate you from my soul, Anna Andreyevna, upon your new happiness!

LYULYUKOV: I have the honor to congratulate you, Anna Andreyevna. (*He goes to kiss her hand, then turning towards the spectators,*

he makes a clicking sound with his tongue with an air of bravado.) Marya Antonovna, I have the honor to congratulate you! *(He goes to kiss her hand and turns to the spectators with the same bravado.)*

SCENE V

A number of guests in frock coats and swallowtails come up first to kiss the hand of ANNA ANDREYEVNA, saying her name, then to MARYA ANTONOVNA, saying hers. BOBCHINSKY and DOBCHINSKY push their way forward.

BOBCHINSKY: I have the honor to congratulate you!

DOBCHINSKY: Anton Antonovich, I have the honor to congratulate you!

BOBCHINSKY: Upon this prosperous event!

DOBCHINSKY: Anna Andreyevna!

BOBCHINSKY: Anna Andreyevna! *(Both go up to kiss her hand at the same time and knock their heads together.)*

DOBCHINSKY: Marya Antonovna! *(He goes to kiss her hand.)* I have the honor to congratulate you. You will be very, very happy; you will walk in cloth of gold and eat all sorts of delicate soups, and pass your time very entertainingly.

BOBCHINSKY *(interrupting)*: Marya Antonovna, I have the honor to congratulate you! May God give you all kinds of riches and gold and a baby boy no bigger than that! *(Showing with his hand.)* So small he can sit on the palm of your hand, yes, ma'am; and all the time he'll cry wa, wa, wa!

SCENE VI

Still more guests come to kiss the ladies' hands, among them
LUKA LUKICH and his WIFE

LUKA LUKICH: I have the honor. . . .

LUKA LUKICH'S WIFE: *(running forward)*: I congratulate you, Anna Andreyevna! *(They kiss.)* I was so delighted, truly. They told me, "Anna Andreyevna is marrying off her daughter." "Oh, my goodness," I thought to myself; and I was so delighted that I said to my husband, "Listen, Luky-duky, here's a new happiness for Anna Andreyevna!" "Well," I thought, "thank God!" And I said to him, "I'm so beside myself with joy that I'm burning with impatience to declare it personally to Anna Andreyevna." . . . "Oh, good heavens!" I thought to myself, "Anna Andreyevna was just waiting for a good match for

her daughter, and now see what fate has done: it has all happened exactly as she wished." And truly, I was so glad that I couldn't speak. I wept and wept; why, I fairly sobbed. Luka Lukich even said, "Nastenka, what are you sobbing about?" "Luky-duky," I said, "I don't know, myself; the tears are just flowing in a stream."

CHIEF OF POLICE: I humbly beg you to be seated, ladies and gentlemen! Hey, Mishka, bring in some more chairs here! (*The guests sit down.*)

SCENE VII

*The same, the POLICE CAPTAIN, and
SERGEANTS OF POLICE*

POLICE CAPTAIN: I have the honor to congratulate you, your Honor, and to wish you prosperity and long life!

CHIEF OF POLICE: Thanks, thanks! I beg you to sit down, gentlemen! (*The guests sit down.*)

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: Now please tell us, Anton Antonovich, how all this started, the whole thing, step by step.

CHIEF OF POLICE: The course of the affair was extraordinary: he was kind enough to make the proposal in person.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Very respectfully, and in the most refined manner. He put everything extraordinarily well. "It's only out of respect for your virtues, Anna Andreyevna," he said. And he's such a handsome, well-bred man, of the most aristocratic manners. "Believe me, Anna Andreyevna," he said, "my life isn't worth a kopek; I'm doing this only because I respect your rare qualities."

MARYA ANTONOVNA: Why, mamma, he said that to me!

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Stop it! You don't know anything about it. Don't mix into everything! "I'm astonished, Anna Andreyevna," he says. Then he launched forth into the most flattering words . . . and when I wanted to say, "We really don't dare hope for such an honor," he suddenly fell upon his knees and said in the most aristocratic style: "Anna Andreyevna, don't make me wretched! Please consent to reciprocate my feelings, or I shall let death end it all."

MARYA ANTONOVNA: Really, mamma, he said that about me. . . .

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Yes, of course . . . it was about you, also. . . . I don't deny it at all.

CHIEF OF POLICE: As it was he frightened me; he said he would shoot himself. "I'll shoot myself, I'll shoot myself!" he said.

NUMEROUS GUESTS: Really, you don't say!

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: Well I declare!

LUKA LUKICH: It was surely fate that brought this to pass.

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: Not fate, old man, fate's too flighty a bird: his merits have done it. (*Aside.*) Luck always comes to such swine as he!

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: If you want him, I'll give you that pup you were bargaining for, Anton Antonovich.

CHIEF OF POLICE: No, I've no use for pups now.

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: Well, if you don't want him, we can agree on another dog.

KOROBKIN'S WIFE: Oh, Anna Andreyevna, how glad I am of your happiness! You simply can't imagine!

KOROBKIN: And where, if I may ask, is our eminent guest now? I heard that he had gone away for some reason.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Yes, he has left for one day, on a very important matter.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: To see his uncle and ask his blessing.

CHIEF OF POLICE: To ask his blessing; but to-morrow . . . (*He sneezes, and is greeted by a din of good wishes.*) Thanks very much! But to-morrow he'll be back. . . . (*He sneezes again; renewed chorus of good wishes; the following people speak louder than the others.*)

POLICE CAPTAIN: We wish you good health, your Honor!

BOBCHINSKY: A hundred years and a sack of gold!

DOBCHINSKY: God prolong your days forever and ever!

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: May you croak!

KOROBKIN'S WIFE: The devil take you!

CHIEF OF POLICE: I humbly thank you! I wish you the same.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: We're planning to live in Petersburg now. I confess that in this town there's an atmosphere that's too . . . well, countrified! . . . I confess it's very disagreeable. . . . And my husband—he'll be made a general there.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Yes, and I admit, ladies and gentlemen, deuce take it, that I'd like awfully to be a general.

LUKA LUKICH: God grant you may be!

RASTAKOVSKY: What is impossible for man is possible for God.

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: A big ship travels far.*

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: Your merits deserve the honor.

AMMOS FEDOROVICH (*aside*): That will be the limit, if they actually make him a general! A generalship will suit him like a saddle on a cow! But no, it's a far cry from this to that. There are men here more respectable than you that aren't generals yet.

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH (*aside*): And so he's crawling into a general's boots! What the devil! But there's no telling; he may get to be a

* "Russian proverb."—Sykes.

general. The devil knows he's got conceit enough for it. (*Turning to him.*) Don't forget us then, Anton Antonovich.

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: And if anything should happen—for instance, some emergency in our affairs—don't deny us your patronage!

KOROBKIN: Next year I shall take my son to the capital to enter the government service. Please do us the favor to grant him your protection; be like a father to an orphan child.

CHIEF OF POLICE: I'm quite ready, for my part, to do what I can.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Antosha, you're always ready to make promises. In the first place, you'll have no time to think about that. How can you, and why should you, burden yourself with such promises?

CHIEF OF POLICE: Why not, my dear? Sometimes one can do something.

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: Of course one can; but one can't patronize all the small fry.

KOROBKIN'S WIFE: Do you hear how she's treating us?

A WOMAN GUEST: Yes, she was always like that. I know her. Let her sit at the table and she'll put her feet on it.*

SCENE VIII

The same and the POSTMASTER, who enters out of breath, with an unsealed letter in his hand

POSTMASTER: An astonishing thing, ladies and gentlemen! The official whom we took to be the government inspector, was not the inspector at all.

ALL: What—not the inspector?

POSTMASTER: Absolutely not; I've learned from this letter.

CHIEF OF POLICE: What's that? What's that? From what letter?

POSTMASTER: Why, from his own letter. They brought me a letter to the post office. I glanced at the address and saw, "Post Office Street." I was stupefied. "Well," I thought to myself, "he's surely found some irregularity in the post office and is notifying the authorities." So I took and opened it.

CHIEF OF POLICE: How did you dare?

POSTMASTER: I don't know; some supernatural power inspired me. I was about to call a messenger to dispatch it by express; but such curiosity as I have never felt before overcame me. I couldn't let it go; I simply couldn't! I was just drawn to open it. In one ear I seemed to hear, "Don't unseal it! You'll croak on the spot!" But in the other some demon kept whispering, "Open it, open it, open it!" And when I

* "Russian proverb."—Sykes.

pressed the wax, a fire ran through my veins; and when I unsealed it, I was frozen, by Heaven I was. My hands shook, and all went black before my eyes.

CHIEF OF POLICE: But how did you dare open the letter of such an august emissary?

POSTMASTER: But that's just the point; he ain't an emissary and he ain't august!

CHIEF OF POLICE: Well, what do you think he is?

POSTMASTER: A mere nobody; the devil knows what he is.

CHIEF OF POLICE (*testily*): What do you mean? How dare you call him a nobody and the devil knows who? I'll have you arrested!

POSTMASTER: Who? You?

CHIEF OF POLICE: Yes, I!

POSTMASTER: You ain't the size!

CHIEF OF POLICE: Don't you know that he is marrying my daughter, that I'm to be a dignitary myself, and that I can bundle you off to Siberia?

POSTMASTER: Oh, Anton Antonovich! What's Siberia? Siberia's far away. I'd better read you the letter. Ladies and gentlemen, shall I read the letter?

ALL: Read it, read it!

POSTMASTER (*reading*): "I hasten to inform you, my dear Tryapichkin, what wonders are happening to me. On the road I was cleaned out by an infantry captain, with the result that the innkeeper was going to have me jailed. Then all of a sudden, because of my Petersburg countenance and clothes, the whole town took me for a Governor-General. And now I'm living at the Police Chief's, enjoying myself, and flirting desperately with his wife and daughter. I haven't yet decided which one to begin with—I think the mother, because she seems to be ready to go the limit. Do you remember how hard up we used to be, and dined by being foxy; and how once a confectioner grabbed me by the collar because of some pastry we had eaten, telling him to charge it to the King of England? Now it's the other way round. Everybody lends me money, all I want. They're terrific freaks: you'd die laughing at them. I know you write articles; stick them in your contributions. In the first place, there's the Police Chief, as stupid as a gray jackass. . . ."

CHIEF OF POLICE: It can't be! It isn't there!

POSTMASTER (*showing the letter*): Read it yourself.

CHIEF OF POLICE (*reading*): "As a gray jackass." It can't be! You wrote that yourself!

POSTMASTER: How was I to write it?

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: Read it!

LUKA LUKICH: Read it!

POSTMASTER (*continuing his reading*): "the Police Chief—as stupid as a gray jackass. . . ."

CHIEF OF POLICE: "Oh, damn you! Do you have to repeat it? As if we didn't know it was there!

POSTMASTER (*continuing his reading*): Hm . . . hm . . . hm . . . hm . . . "a gray jackass. The Postmaster is also a nice chap. . . ." (*Stopping.*) Well, then he goes on to express himself rather indecently about me.

CHIEF OF POLICE: No, read it!

POSTMASTER: What for?

CHIEF OF POLICE: What the devil! If you're reading it, read it! Read it all!

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: Here, just let me read it. (*Putting on his spectacles and reading.*) "The Postmaster is the exact image of our department janitor, Mikheyev; and the rascal must be just such another old soak."

POSTMASTER (*to the spectators*): Well, he's a contemptible brat who needs a hiding; that's all!

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH (*continuing*): "The Supervisor of Charitable Insti . . . tu . . . tu . . ." (*He begins to stammer.*)

KOROBKIN: Why are you stopping?

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: The writing is illegible . . . however, I can see he's a scamp.

KOROBKIN: Give it to me! I think I have better eyes. (*Taking hold of the letter.*)

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH (*holding on to it*): No, we can skip that part; further on one can make it out.

KOROBKIN: Come on, I can do it.

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: If it has to be read, I'll do it myself: further on, really, it's quite legible.

POSTMASTER: No, read it all! So far everything has been read.

ALL: Give him the letter, Artemy Filippovich, give him the letter! (*To Korobkin.*) Read it!

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: All right. (*Giving the letter.*) Here, if you please . . . (*Covering part with his finger.*) Read from here on. (*All gather around him.*)

POSTMASTER: Read it, read it! Nonsense! Read it all!

KOROBKIN (*reading*): "The Supervisor of Charitable Institutions, Zemlyanika, is a regular pig in a nightcap."

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH (*to the Spectators*): It isn't even witty! A pig in a nightcap! When did a pig ever have a nightcap?

KOROBKIN (*continuing*): "The Superintendent of Schools reeks of onions from head to foot."

LUKA LUKICH (*to the SPECTATORS*): By God, I never had an onion in my mouth!

AMMOS FEDOROVICH (*aside*): Thank God, at least there's nothing about me!

KOROBKIN (*reading*): "The Judge . . ."

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: Now I'll catch it! . . . (*Aloud.*) Ladies and gentlemen, I think the letter's rather long. Devil take it, why read such trash?

LUKA LUKICH: No!

POSTMASTER: No, read it!

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: No, just read it!

KOROBKIN (*continuing*): "The Judge, Lyapkin-Tyapkin, is *movay* tone in the highest degree. . . ." (*Stopping.*) That must be a French word.

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: The devil knows what it means! It's all right if it's nothing but swindler, but it may mean something worse!

KOROBKIN (*continuing*): "But after all they're a hospitable and kind-hearted lot. Good-by, my dear Tryapichkin. I myself, following your example, want to become a writer. It's a bore to live like this, my boy; one needs food for one's soul. I see that exactly what I need is something lofty to occupy me. Write to me in Saratov Province, to the village of Podkatilovka." (*He turns over the letter and reads the address.*) "To Ivan Vasilyevich Tryapichkin, Esquire, Third Floor, Number Ninety-seven, turning to the right from the yard entrance, Post Office Street, St. Petersburg."

ONE OF THE LADIES: What an unexpected setback!

CHIEF OF POLICE: He's as good as cut my throat! I'm killed. I'm simply killed dead. I can see absolutely nothing in front of me but pigs' snouts instead of faces. . . . Get him back, get him back! (*He waves his arm.*)

POSTMASTER: How can we get him back? It's just my luck to have ordered the superintendent to give him the fastest horses; and the devil put me up to sending similar orders ahead.

KOROBKIN'S WIFE: This is certainly confusion worse confounded!

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: But, damn it, gentlemen, he borrowed three hundred rubles from me!

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: Three hundred from me, too.

POSTMASTER (*sighing*): Oh, and three hundred from me!

BOBCHINSKY: And from me and Petr Ivanovich, sixty-five, sir, in notes, yes, sir!

AMMOS FEDOROVICH (*shrugging his shoulders in perplexity*): How

did this happen, gentlemen? How in the world did we make such a mistake?

CHIEF OF POLICE (*striking his brow*): How could I, how could I, old blockhead that I am! Stupid old ram! I've outlived my good sense! . . . Thirty years I've been in the service; not a merchant, not a contractor has been able to impose on me; I've fooled swindlers upon swindlers; sharpers and rascals who could fool the whole world I have hooked neatly! I've bamboozled three governors! . . . What are governors! (*Waving his hand.*) Governors aren't worth mentioning!

ANNA ANDREYEVNA: But this can't be, Antosha; he's betrothed to Mashenka.

CHIEF OF POLICE (*angrily*): Betrothed! A cat and a fiddle! Betrothed indeed! She dares to throw the engagement in my face! . . . (*In desperation.*) Here, just look—all the world, all Christianity, all of you—just see how the Police Chief has made a fool of himself! Blockhead that he is! the old blockhead, the old scoundrel! (*Threatening himself with his fist.*) Oh, you thick-nosed imbecile! To take a lounge-lizard, a rag, for a man of importance! And there he skims along the road with his bells jingling! He'll spread the story all over the earth! And I'll not only be a laughingstock, but some quill-driver, some paper-spoiler will be found to put me in a comedy! That's what hurts! He won't spare my rank or my calling; and they'll all show their teeth in a grin and clap their hands. What are you laughing at? You're laughing at yourselves! . . . Damn you! . . . (*He stamps on the floor in his rage.*) I'd like to do the same to all scribblers! Bah, you quill-drivers, you damned Liberals! You devil's brood! I'd like to tie you all in a knot and grind you to powder, and ram you into the devil's cap! . . . (*He strikes out with his fist and stamps on the floor. After a brief silence.*) I simply can't get over it. Indeed it's true that when God wants to punish a man, he takes away his reason first. Now, what was there in that weathercock like a government inspector? Absolutely nothing! Not even half a finger's length of resemblance; but suddenly everybody shouts, "The inspector, the government inspector!" Now, who was the first to let out the notion that he was the government inspector? Speak up!

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH (*shrugging his shoulders*): I couldn't tell you how it happened if my life depended on it! It's as if a fog had descended upon us and the devil had misled us.

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: Who started it? There's who: those two smart Alecks! (*Pointing to DOBCHINSKY and BOBCHINSKY.*)

BOBCHINSKY: Not at all! Not me! I never even thought . . .

DOBCHINSKY: I didn't do anything, absolutely not . . .

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: Of course you did.

LUKA LUKICH: It stands to reason. They ran in from the tavern like two lunatics, yelling: "He's come! He's come! and he doesn't pay anything! . . ." They found a rare bird!

CHIEF OF POLICE: Naturally, it was you. You town scandal-mongers, you damned liars!

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: May the devil take you with your inspectors and your yarns!

CHIEF OF POLICE: You just snoop about the town and mess things up, you damned chatterboxes! You scatter scandals, you bobtailed magpies!

AMMOS FEDOROVICH: You damned bunglers!

LUKA LUKICH: Dunces!

ARTEMY FILIPPOVICH: Pot-bellied little shrimps! (*They all surround them.*)

BOBCHINSKY: By God, it wasn't I, it was Petr Ivanovich!

DOBCHINSKY: It was not, Petr Ivanovich, you said it first. . . .

BOBCHINSKY: Certainly not; you were the first yourself.

LAST SCENE

The same and a GENDARME

GENDARME: The official who has come from Petersburg by imperial order demands your instant appearance before him. He is stopping at the inn.

(The words just pronounced strike all like a thunderbolt. A sound of astonishment escapes from the lips of all the ladies at once; the whole group, having suddenly changed its position, remains as if petrified.)

DUMB SHOW

The CHIEF OF POLICE stands in the midst like a post, his arms outspread and his head tilted backwards; on the right his wife and his daughter appear on the verge of rushing towards him; beyond them the POSTMASTER, transformed into a question mark, is turned towards the spectators; beyond him LUKA LUKICH, in the most innocent bewilderment; beyond him, at the very edge of the scene, three lady guests are leaning towards each other with the most sarcastic expressions of countenance, aimed directly at the POLICE CHIEF'S FAMILY. On the POLICE CHIEF's left stands ZEMLYANIKA, his head inclined somewhat to one side, as if he were listening to something; beyond him the JUDGE, with outspread arms, almost squatting on the floor, and making movements of the lips as if about to whistle or say, "So you see what you've come to, old lady!" Beyond him is KOROBKIN, turned towards the spectators, with one eye cocked and a derisive gesture toward the CHIEF

OF POLICE; beyond him, on the extreme side, DOBCHINSKY and BOBCHINSKY make movements of their hands towards each other, their mouths open, and regarding each other with bulging eyes. The other guests simply stand like statues. For nearly a minute and a half the group remains in this position.)

THE CURTAIN FALLS

A MONTH IN THE COUNTRY

A Comedy in Five Acts

BY IVAN SERGEYEVICH TURGENEV

(1850)

Translated by George Rapall Noyes

CHARACTERS

ARKÁDY SERGÉICH ISLÁYEV, *a rich landowner, thirty-six years old*
NATÁLYA PETRÓVNA (NATÁSHA), *his wife, twenty-nine years old*
KÓLYA, *their son, ten years old*
VERA (VÉROCHKA *), *a protégée of the family, seventeen years old*
ANNA SEMÉNOVNA † ISLÁYEV, *mother of ISLÁYEV, fifty-eight years old*
LIZAVÉTA BOGDÁNOVNA, *a companion, thirty-seven years old*
ADÁM IVÁNOVICH SCHAAF, *a German tutor, forty-five years old*
MIKHÁYLO ALEXÁNDROVICH RAKÍTIN, *a friend of the family, thirty years old*
ALEXÉY NIKOLÁYEVICH BELYÁYEV, *a student, teacher of KÓLYA, twenty-one years old*
AFANÁSY IVÁNOVICH BOLSHINTSÓV, *a neighbor, forty-eight years old*
IGNÁTY ILYÍCH SHPIGÉLSKY, *a doctor, forty years old*
MATVÉY, *a servant, forty years old*
KÁTYA, *a maid, twenty years old*

The action takes place on ISLAYEV's estate, about 1840. There is a lapse of one day between Acts I and II, II and III, and IV and V.

* An affectionate diminutive.

† Pronounced, Se-myō'no-vna.

A MONTH IN THE COUNTRY

ACT I

A drawing-room. On the right a card table and door to the study. Center, a door to the hall. On the left, two windows and a round table. In the corners of the room are couches. At the card table ANNA SEMENOVNA, LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA, and SCHAAF are playing preference. At the round table are seated NATALYA PETROVNA and RAKITIN. NATALYA is embroidering on canvas. RAKITIN has a book in his hands. The wall clock points to three.

SCHAAF: Hearts.

ANNA SEMENOVNA: Once more! My dear sir, you will beat us all to nothing.

SCHAAF (*phlegmatically*): Eight on hearts.

ANNA SEMENOVNA (*to LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA*): What a man! There's no playing with him. (*LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA smiles.*)

NATALYA PETROVNA (*to RAKITIN*): Why have you stopped? Go on reading.

RAKITIN (*slowly raising his head*): "Monte Cristo se redressa haletant. . . ." Natalya Petrovna, are you interested?

NATALYA PETROVNA: Not a bit.

RAKITIN: Why are we reading this, then?

NATALYA PETROVNA: This is why. The other day a lady said to me, "Haven't you read Monte Cristo? You ought to read it; it is charming." At the time I made her no reply, but now I can tell her I have read it and did not find it charming at all.

RAKITIN: Very well, if you have already convinced yourself. . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA: Oh, how lazy you are!

RAKITIN: I am ready to go on, certainly. (*He finds the place where he has stopped.*) "Se redressa haletant, et . . ."

NATALYA PETROVNA (*interrupting him*): Have you seen Arkady to-day?

RAKITIN: I met him at the dam. Your men are repairing it. He was explaining something to the workmen, and to make it clearer, he waded into the sand up to his knees.

NATALYA PETROVNA: He takes hold of everything with too much

enthusiasm—tries too hard. That's his failing. What do you think about it?

RAKITIN: I agree with you.

NATALYA PETROVNA: How tiresome! You always agree with me. Go on reading.

RAKITIN: Ah, so you want me to quarrel with you. All right.

NATALYA PETROVNA: I do! . . . I do! . . . I want you to have a will of your own. Read on, I tell you.

RAKITIN: I obey. (*Applies himself to the book again.*)

SCHAAF: On hearts.

ANNA SEMENOVNA: What! Once more? This is unbearable. (*To NATALYA PETROVNA.*) Natasha! Natasha!

NATALYA PETROVNA: What?

ANNA SEMENOVNA: Just imagine! Schaaf has been beating us all to pieces. He keeps saying seven or eight on hearts.

SCHAAF: Zis time, seven once more.

ANNA SEMENOVNA: Do you hear? This is awful.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Yes. Awful. (*To SCHAAF.*) Well, you can have them!

ANNA SEMENOVNA (*to NATALYA PETROVNA*): But where's Kolya?

NATALYA PETROVNA: He's gone walking with the new teacher.

ANNA SEMENOVNA: Ah, Lizaveta Bogdanovna, I call you.

RAKITIN (*to NATALYA PETROVNA*): With what teacher?

NATALYA PETROVNA: Oh, yes. I forgot to tell you. While you were gone we hired a new teacher.

RAKITIN: In place of Dufour?

NATALYA PETROVNA: No. A Russian teacher. The princess will send us a Frenchman from Moscow.

RAKITIN: What kind of a man is he—this Russian? Old?

NATALYA PETROVNA: No. Young. However, we have taken him only for the summer months.

RAKITIN: Oh, a general tutor.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Yes. That's what they call it, I believe. And, let me tell you, Rakitin, you like to observe people, to analyze them, to study their natures. . . .

RAKITIN: Good gracious! Why do you . . . ?

NATALYA PETROVNA: Yes, yes. . . . Observe him carefully. I like him. He's slender and well-built. He has a merry glance and a confident expression—you will see. To be sure, he is a little clumsy, and in your eyes, that's a drawback.

RAKITIN: Natalya Petrovna, you are frightfully hard on me to-day.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Joking aside, just observe him. It seems to me that he may turn out a splendid man. However Lord knows!

RAKITIN: You arouse my curiosity.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Really? (*Pensively.*) Go on reading.

RAKITIN: "Se redressa haletant, et . . ."

NATALYA PETROVNA (*suddenly looking around*): Where is Vera? I haven't seen her since morning. (*With a smile to RAKITIN.*) Drop that book! I see we shan't be able to read to-day. You'd better tell me some story or other.

RAKITIN: Very well. What shall I tell you? You know I have spent some days with the Krinitseys. Just imagine! Our young people already are being bored.

NATALYA PETROVNA: How did you manage to observe that?

RAKITIN: Is it possible to conceal boredom? You can conceal anything else, but not boredom.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*with a glance at him*): Can you conceal everything else?

RAKITIN (*after a short silence*): I think so.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*lowering her eyes*): So, what did you do at the Krinitseys'?

RAKITIN: Nothing at all. Being bored with friends is an awful thing. You feel at ease, you are not embarrassed, you like them, you have nothing to be vexed at, but still boredom torments you, and your heart is silly enough to ache as if it were hungry.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Probably you are often bored with friends.

RAKITIN: As if you yourself did not know what it means to be with a person whom you love and of whom you are tired!

NATALYA PETROVNA (*slowly*): Whom you love—that is a great word. You speak somewhat mysteriously.

RAKITIN: Mysteriously? Why mysteriously?

NATALYA PETROVNA: Yes. That's your failing. Do you know, Rakitin, of course you are a very clever man, but . . . (*stopping*) sometimes you and I converse as if we were weaving lace. . . . And have you watched people weaving lace? They do it in stuffy rooms, without moving from the spot. Lace is a beautiful thing, but a swallow of fresh water on a hot day is far better.

RAKITIN: Natalya Petrovna, to-day you—

NATALYA PETROVNA: What?

RAKITIN: To-day you are angry at me for some reason.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Oh, you shrewd men! How little penetration you have even if you are shrewd! . . . No. I am not angry at you.

ANNA SEMENOVNA. Oh, at last he's caught. He has to pay a fine. (*To NATALYA PETROVNA.*) Natasha, our villain has had to pay a fine.

SCHAAF (*sourly*): Lissafet Bogdanovna is to blame.

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA (*crossly*): Excuse me. How was I to know that Anna Semenovna had no hearts?

SCHAAF: In ze future I vill not call Lissafet Bogdanovna.

ANNA SEMENOVNA (*to SCHAAF*): But how is she to blame?

SCHAAF (*repeats in exactly the same voice*): In ze future I vill not call Lissafet Bogdanovna.

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA: What do I care? The idea!

RAKITIN: The more I watch you, Natalya Petrovna, the more I find your face strange to-day.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*with a certain curiosity*): Really?

RAKITIN: It's true I observe a definite change in you.

NATALYA PETROVNA: In that case, will you be so kind—you know me—guess the nature of that change that has taken place in me. What is it?

RAKITIN: Well, just wait a moment. . . .

(KOLYA suddenly runs in noisily from the hall, straight to ANNA SEMENOVNA.)

KOLYA: Grandma! Grandma! Just look what I have. (*He shows her a bow and arrows.*) Just look!

ANNA SEMENOVNA: Show them to me, my darling. Oh, what a splendid bow! Who made it for you?

KOLYA: He did! He did! (*He points at BELYAYEV, who has stopped at the door of the hall.*)

ANNA SEMENOVNA: Oh, how nicely it is made.

KOLYA: I've shot from it at a tree, grandma, and I hit it twice. (*He jumps up and down.*)

NATALYA PETROVNA: Show it to me, Kolya.

KOLYA (*runs to her and talks while NATALYA PETROVNA examines the bow*): Oh, maman, how splendidly Alexey Nikolayevich climbs trees! He's going to teach me how, and he's going to teach me to swim, too. He's going to teach me everything. (*He jumps up and down.*)

NATALYA PETROVNA (*to BELYAYEV*): I'm very grateful to you for your attention to Kolya—

KOLYA (*interrupting her excitedly*): I'm so fond of him, maman—so very fond of him.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*stroking KOLYA on the head*): My boy is a little bit pampered. Try to change him into a strong and vigorous lad. (*BELYAYEV bows.*)

KOLYA: Alexey Nikolayevich, come on to the stable. We'll take some bread to Favorit.

BELYAYEV: Come on.

ANNA SEMENOVNA (*to KOLYA*): Come here and kiss me first.

KOLYA (*running away*): Later, grandma, later. (*Runs off into the hall; BELYAYEV follows him.*)

ANNA SEMENOVNA (*following KOLYA with her eyes*): What a charming child! (*To SCHAAF and LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA.*) Is he not?

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA: Yes, indeed.

SCHAAF (*after a short silence*): I pass.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*with a certain animation*): Well, how did he strike you?

RAKITIN: Who?

NATALYA PETROVNA (*after a short silence*): That—Russian teacher.

RAKITIN: Oh, excuse me. I quite forgot. I was so occupied with the question that you put to me. (*NATALYA PETROVNA looks at him with a hardly perceptible, mocking smile.*) However, his face . . . is really . . . Yes, he has a nice face. I like him, only he seems very bashful.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Yes.

RAKITIN (*glancing at her*): But, nevertheless, I cannot make up my mind. . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA: What if you and I took him in hand, Rakitin. Do you wish to? Let us finish his education. This is a splendid chance for sober, sedate people like you and me! We are very sedate, aren't we?

RAKITIN: This young man interests you. If he knew it—he would feel flattered.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Oh, believe me, not at all! You can't judge of him by what—people like us would do in his place. He's not at all like us, Rakitin. That's the trouble, my friend. We study ourselves with great diligence and then imagine that we know men.

RAKITIN: Another man's soul is a dark forest. But why these hints? Why do you keep teasing me to-day?

NATALYA PETROVNA: Whom should we tease if not our friends? And you are my friend—you know it. (*Presses his hand. RAKITIN smiles and his face brightens.*) You are my old friend.

RAKITIN: I'm only afraid that you may grow tired of that old friend.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*laughing*): We grow tired only of good things.

RAKITIN: Maybe. . . . Only that makes it no easier for them.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Stop it. (*Lowering her voice.*) As if you did not know . . . *ce que vous êtes pour moi.*

RAKITIN: Natalya Petrovna, you are playing with me as a cat with a mouse. . . . But the mouse does not complain.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Oh, poor little mouse!

ANNA SEMENOVNA: Twenty kopeks from you, Adam Ivanovich. . . .
Aha!

SCHAAF: In ze future I vill not call Lissafet Bogdanovna.

MATVEY (*entering from the hall and announcing*): Ignaty Ilyich has arrived.

SHPIGELSKY (*entering after him*): Doctors are not announced. (*MATVEY goes out.*) My most humble respects to the whole family. (*Goes to ANNA SEMENOVNA and kisses her hand.*) Good day, madam. I trust you are winning?

ANNA SEMENOVNA: Winning! I had hard work to come out even. . . . Thank the Lord for that! It's all owing to this villain. (*Points to SCHAAF.*)

SHPIGELSKY (*to SCHAAF*): Adam Ivanovich, with ladies! That is not nice. . . . I'm ashamed of you!

SCHAAF (*muttering through his teeth*): Wiz ladies, wiz ladies. . . .

SHPIGELSKY (*going up to the round table on the left*): Good day, Natalya Petrovna! Good day, Mikhaylo Alexandrovich!

NATALYA PETROVNA: Good day, doctor! How are you?

SHPIGELSKY: I like that question very much. . . . So *you* are well. How am I getting along? A respectable doctor is never ill. He just suddenly up and dies. . . . Ha! ha!

NATALYA PETROVNA: Sit down. I am well, to be sure—but I'm not in good spirits. . . . And even that is ill health.

SHPIGELSKY (*sitting down beside NATALYA PETROVNA*): Permit me to feel your pulse. (*He feels it.*) Ah, those nerves, those nerves. . . . You take too little exercise, Natalya Petrovna. You laugh too little. . . . That's the trouble. Mikhaylo Alexandrovich, what are you looking at? Now, I can prescribe white drops.

NATALYA PETROVNA: I'm not averse to laughing. . . . (*With animation.*) Now, doctor, you have a spiteful tongue. I'm honestly very fond of you for that quality and respect you for it. . . . Tell me something funny. Mikhaylo Alexandrovich insists upon talking seriously to-day.

SHPIGELSKY (*looking stealthily at RAKITIN*): Evidently it is not only the nerves that suffer, but you have a slight effusion of bile.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Oh, you are singing the same song! Observe as much as you wish, doctor, but not aloud. We all know that you are frightfully penetrating. . . . You are both very penetrating.

SHPIGELSKY: I agree.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Tell us something funny.

SHPIGELSKY: I agree. I never thought of expecting you all of a sudden to want me to tell a story. Let me take a pinch of snuff. (*He takes one.*)

NATALYA PETROVNA: What preparations!

SHPIGELSKY: But, my dear madam, Natalya Petrovna, please consider there are different sorts of funny stories. It depends on the person. In the case of your neighbor, Mr. Hlopushkin, you only have to raise one finger and he explodes into laughter and wheezes and weeps. . . . But you . . . Well, permit me. Do you know Platon Vasilyevich Verinitsyn?

NATALYA PETROVNA: I think I know him, or I have heard of him.

SHPIGELSKY: He has an insane sister. In my opinion, either both of them are insane or both of them in their right mind, because there is absolutely no difference between brother and sister, but that is not the point. Fate always, fate always, fate, fate everywhere. Verinitsyn has a daughter, a sallow girl, you know, with pale eyes, a little red nose, and yellow lips—in a word, a very amiable girl. She plays the piano and lisps, too. So everything is as it should be. She has two hundred serfs,* and her aunt has one hundred and fifty. Her aunt is still alive and will live a long time, as all insane people are long-lived. But still there is a remedy for every grief. She has made a will in favor of her niece. Only yesterday I, with my own hands, poured cold water on her head, and I had absolutely no reason to do so, because there is utterly no possibility of curing her. Well, so then, Verinitsyn has a daughter—not the worst match in the world. He began to take her into society; suitors began to make their appearance. Among others, there was a certain Perekuzov, an anæmic young fellow, timid, but of excellent principles. So the father liked our Perekuzov, and the daughter liked him too. Then where was the hindrance, you say? Let them be married, and good luck to them! And really everything went finely. Mr. Verinitsyn, Platon Vasilyevich, was already beginning to tap Mr. Perekuzov on the stomach, this way, you know, and to pat him on the shoulder, when suddenly, from somewhere or other, an officer turned up—Ardalion Protobekasov. At the ball of the Marshal of the Nobility he saw Verinitsyn's daughter. He danced three polkas with her, and he said to her, probably rolling his eyes like this, "Oh, how unhappy I am!" And the young lady immediately fell for it. Then there were tears, sighs, and "ohs." She wouldn't look at Perekuzov, wouldn't talk to Perekuzov—she had spasms at the mere word "marriage." Good Lord my God, what a story! "Well," thinks Verinitsyn, "if it's Protobekasov, then Protobekasov it must be. It's lucky that he, too, is a man of property." They invite Protobekasov and say, "Do us the honor." Protobekasov does them the honor. Protobekasov arrives, hangs around, falls in love, finally offers his hand and heart.

* A landed proprietor's wealth was reckoned by the number of serfs that he owned.

What do you think about it? Does the Verinitsyn girl immediately agree with joy? Not much! God forbid! Again tears, sighs, spasms! The father is clean stuck: "What's this anyway? What does she want?" And what do you think she answers him? "I don't know, dad," says she, "whether I love this man or the other one." "What's that?" "Honest to God, I don't know, and I'd better not marry either one, but just love him." Verinitsyn, of course, immediately had a fit, and the suitors, also, didn't know what was up, but she held her ground! Pray consider what miracles take place in these parts.

NATALYA PETROVNA: I don't see anything surprising in this. . . . As if it were impossible to love two men at once!

RAKITIN: Ah, you think . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA (*slowly*): I think— However, I don't know. Maybe this proves only that you love neither one of them.

SHPIGELSKY (*taking snuff and looking first at NATALYA PETROVNA and then at RAKITIN*): That's it. That's it.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*to SHPIGELSKY with animation*): Your story is very good, but nevertheless you didn't make me laugh.

SHPIGELSKY: But, my dear madam, who could ever make you laugh now, if you please? You don't need that now.

NATALYA PETROVNA: What do I need?

SHPIGELSKY (*with an affectedly submissive air*): The Lord only knows!

NATALYA PETROVNA: Oh, how tiresome you are! No better than Rakitin!

SHPIGELSKY: That is a great honor, if you please.

(NATALYA PETROVNA *makes an impatient movement*.)

ANNA SEMENOVNA (*rising from her place*): Well, at last! . . . (*Sighs*.) I've sat still so long that my joints are stiff. (LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA and SCHAAF *also rise*.) O—oh!

NATALYA PETROVNA (*rises and goes to them*): You must like sitting still for so long.

(SHPIGELSKY and RAKITIN *rise*.)

ANNA SEMENOVNA (*to SCHAAF*). You owe seventy kopeks, my dear sir. (SCHAAF *bows stiffly*.) You can't give us orders all the time. (*To NATALYA PETROVNA*.) You seem to be pale to-day, Natasha. Are you well? Shpigelsky, is she well? . . .

SHPIGELSKY (*who has been whispering with RAKITIN*): Oh, perfectly.

ANNA SEMENOVNA: That's right. . . . But I'll go and rest a bit before dinner. I'm tired to death! Liza, come on. Oh, my joints, my joints! . . .

(*She goes into the hall with LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA. NATALYA PETROVNA accompanies her to the door. SHPIGELSKY, RAKITIN, and SCHAAF remain in the foreground.*)

SHPIGELSKY (*to SCHAAF, offering his snuff box*): Well, Adam Ivanovich, *wie befinden sie sich*?

SCHAAF (*taking snuff with dignity*): Very vell. And how are you?

SHPIGELSKY: Thank you kindly. . . . So, so. (*To RAKITIN in a low voice.*) Don't you really know what the matter is with Natalya Petrovna to-day?

RAKITIN: I honestly don't know.

SHPIGELSKY: Well, if you don't know . . . (*He turns aside and goes to meet NATALYA PETROVNA, who returns from the door.*) I have a small bit of business with you, Natalya Petrovna.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*going to the window*): Really? What?

SHPIGELSKY: I need to speak with you alone.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Really? You frighten me!

(*RAKITIN meanwhile has taken SCHAAF's arm and is walking back and forth with him and is whispering something to him in German. SCHAAF laughs, and says in a low voice: "Ja, ja, ja! Ja wohl, ja wohl! Sehr gut."*)

SHPIGELSKY (*lowering his voice*): This matter really concerns others besides yourself.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*looking into the garden*): What do you mean?

SHPIGELSKY: This is how the matter stands. One of my acquaintances asked me to find out . . . so to speak . . . your intentions with regard to your protégée . . . Vera Alexandrovna.

NATALYA PETROVNA: My intentions?

SHPIGELSKY: That is, to speak frankly . . . my acquaintance—

NATALYA PETROVNA: Is he making a proposal for her?

SHPIGELSKY: Quite so.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Are you joking?

SHPIGELSKY: Not at all, madam.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*laughing*): But pray consider, she is still a child. What a strange commission!

SHPIGELSKY: Why strange, Natalya Petrovna? My acquaintance—

NATALYA PETROVNA: You're a splendid man of business, Shpigelsky. And who is your acquaintance?

SHPIGELSKY (*smiling*): Permit me, permit me, you have not yet told me anything positive with regard to—

NATALYA PETROVNA: Stop, doctor. Vera is still a child. You know that yourself, Mr. Diplomat. (*Turning around.*) By the way, here she is.

(*VERA and KOLYA run in from the hall.*)

KOLYA (*running to RAKITIN*): Rakitin, tell 'em to give us some glue, some glue!

NATALYA PETROVNA (*to VERA*): Where do you come from? (*Patting her on the cheek.*) How flushed you are!

VERA: From the garden. . . . (*SHPIGELSKY bows to her.*) How do you do, Ignaty Ilyich?

RAKITIN (*to KOLYA*): What do you want glue for?

KOLYA: I must have it! I must have it! . . . Alexey Nikolayevich is making a kite for us. . . . Tell 'em! . . .

RAKITIN (*about to ring the bell*): Wait, right away.

SCHAAF: *Erlauben Sie.* . . . Mr. Kolya hass not hat hiss lesson to-day. (*Takes KOLYA by the hand.*) *Kommen Sie!*

KOLYA (*in a melancholy tone*): *Morgen, Herr Schaaf, morgen.*

SCHAAF: "*Morgen, Morgen, nur nicht heute, sagen alle faule Leute.*" *Kommen Sie!* (*KOLYA resists.*)

NATALYA PETROVNA (*to VERA*): Who have you been walking with for so long? I haven't seen you since morning.

VERA: With Alexey Nikolayevich . . . with Kolya. . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA: Ah. (*Turning.*) Kolya, what does this mean?

KOLYA (*lowering his voice*): Mr. Schaaf . . . Mamma dear.

RAKITIN (*to NATALYA PETROVNA*): They are making a kite outside, and in here he's due for a lesson.

SCHAAF (*with a feeling of dignity*): *Gnädige Frau* . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA (*sternly to KOLYA*): Kindly be obedient? You have had enough fun to-day. Go with Mr. Schaaf.

SCHAAF (*leading KOLYA into the hall*): *Es ist unerhört!*

KOLYA (*whispering to RAKITIN as he leaves*): All the same, tell 'em to get the glue. (*RAKITIN nods.*)

SCHAAF (*pulling at KOLYA*): *Kommen Sie, mein Herr.* . . .

(*Goes out into the hall with him; RAKITIN follows them.*)

NATALYA PETROVNA (*to VERA*): Sit down. You must be tired. (*She sits down herself.*)

VERA (*sitting down*): Not at all.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*with a smile to SHPIGELSKY*): Shpigelsky, look at her. Isn't she tired?

SHPIGELSKY: But that does Vera Alexandrovna good.

NATALYA PETROVNA: I do not say . . . (*To VERA.*) Well, what have you been doing in the garden?

VERA: Playing, running. At first we watched them building the dam, and then Alexey Nikolayevich climbed a tree for a squirrel—way, way up, and he began to shake the top of the tree. . . . We all

felt very scared. . . . At last the squirrel fell, and Trezor almost caught it, but it got away.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*looking at SHPIGELSKY with a smile*): And then?

VERA: And then Alexey Nikolayevich made a bow for Kolya, and so quickly! . . . And then he stole up to our cow in the meadow and all of a sudden jumped on her back. . . . The cow was scared and began to run and kick, and he just laughed. (*She laughs herself.*) And then Alexey Nikolayevich wanted to make a kite for us and so we came here.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*patting her on the cheek*): You're a child, a child, a perfect child. Aren't you?—What do you think about it, Shpigelsky?

SHPIGELSKY (*speaks slowly, watching NATALYA PETROVNA*): I agree with you.

NATALYA PETROVNA: That's right.

SHPIGELSKY: But this does no harm. . . . On the contrary. . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA: Do you think so? (*To VERA.*) Well, did you have a very good time?

VERA: Yes. . . . Alexey Nikolayevich is so amusing.

NATALYA PETROVNA: So that's it. (*After a short silence.*) VERA, how old are you? (*VERA looks at her with a certain amazement.*) You're a child, a child. (*RATIKIN comes in from the hall.*)

SHPIGELSKY (*fussily*): Oh, I forgot. . . . Your coachman is ill . . . and I haven't seen him yet.

NATALYA PETROVNA: What's the matter with him?

SHPIGELSKY: Fever. However, there's no great danger.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*calling after him*): Are you dining with us, doctor?

SHPIGELSKY: If you'll permit me. (*Goes out into the hall.*)

NATALYA PETROVNA: *Mon enfant, vous feriez bien de mettre une autre robe pour le diner.* . . . (*VERA rises.*) Come to my room. (*Kisses her on the forehead.*) A child! A child!

(*VERA kisses her hand and goes into the study.*)

RAKITIN (*in a low voice to VERA, winking*): I've sent everything necessary to Alexey Nikolayevich.

VERA (*whispering*): Thank you, Mikhaylo Alexandrovich. (*Goes out.*)

RAKITIN (*approaching NATALYA PETROVNA, who stretches out her hand to him. He immediately seizes it*): At last we're alone. . . . Natalya Petrovna, tell me what is the matter with you?

NATALYA PETROVNA: Nothing, Michel, nothing. And even if there was anything, it is all over now. Sit down. (*RAKITIN sits down beside*

her.) This happens to everybody. Little clouds pass over the sky. Why are you looking at me in this way?

RAKITIN: I'm looking at you. . . . I'm happy.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*smiling in reply to him*): Open the window, Michel. How fine it is in the garden. (RAKITIN *gets up and opens the window.*) Greetings, wind! (*She laughs.*) The wind seems to have been waiting for a chance to break in. (*She looks around.*) How it has taken possession of the whole room! . . . You can't drive it out now.

RAKITIN: Now you're as soft and quiet as an evening after a thunderstorm.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*pensively repeating his last words*): "After a thunderstorm." . . .

RAKITIN (*shaking his head*): One was gathering.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Really? (*Looking at him after a short silence.*) Let me tell you, Michel, I cannot imagine a kinder man than yourself. Honestly. (RAKITIN *tries to stop her.*) No, don't hinder me from expressing myself. You are sympathetic, affectionate, faithful. You do not betray one. I am indebted to you in many ways.

RAKITIN: Natalya Petrovna, why do you say this to me at this particular moment?

NATALYA PETROVNA: I don't know. I feel gay. I'm taking a bit of relaxation. Don't forbid me to chatter.

RAKITIN (*pressing her hand*): You are kind as an angel.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*laughing*): This morning you would not have said that! . . . But listen to me, Michel. You know me, you must excuse me. Our relations are so pure, so sincere, and yet they are not entirely natural.—You and I have a right to look straight in the eyes, not only of Arkady, but of all the world. Yes, but . . . (*Falls into meditation.*) that is why I am sometimes troubled and depressed and cross. I am ready like a child to vent my vexation upon another person, especially upon you. . . . This preference does not make you angry?

RAKITIN (*with animation*): On the contrary. . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA: Yes. Sometimes it's pleasant to torture a person whom you love . . . whom you love. You see that I, like Tatyana, can say, "Why dissemble?" *

RAKITIN: Natalya Petrovna, you—

NATALYA PETROVNA (*interrupting him*): Yes . . . I love you. But let me tell you, Rakitin, do you know that occasionally it seems strange to me. I love you, and that feeling is so clear, so peaceful. . . . It

* A reference to Pushkin's poem, *Eugene Onegin*.

does not excite me . . . I am warmed by it, but . . . (*With animation.*) You never have caused me to weep, and I apparently should—(*Interrupting herself.*) What does this mean?

RAKITIN (*somewhat sadly*): Such a question demands no answer.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*pensively*): Yet you and I are old acquaintances.

RAKITIN: Four years. Yes. We're old friends. . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA: Friends. No, you are more than a friend to me.

RAKITIN: Natalya Petrovna, do not touch on that question. I fear for my happiness—that it may vanish under your hands.

NATALYA PETROVNA: No . . . no . . . no! The whole thing is that you are too kind. You humor me too much. . . . You have spoiled me. . . . You are too kind. . . . Do you hear?

RAKITIN (*with a smile*): I hear.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*looking at him*): I don't know how you . . . I wish no other happiness. . . . Many people might envy me. (*She stretches out both hands to him.*) Is that not true?

RAKITIN: I am in your power. . . . Do with me as you wish. (*From the hall is heard ISLAYEV's voice: "So you have sent for him."*)

NATALYA PETROVNA (*rising quickly*): It is he. I cannot see him now. . . . Good-by! (*She goes out into the study.*)

RAKITIN (*gazing after her*): What does this mean? Is it the beginning of the end, or absolutely the end? (*After a short silence.*) Or the beginning?

(*ISLAYEV comes in with a troubled air and takes off his hat.*)

ISLAYEV: Good day, Michel! *

RAKITIN: We've seen each other before to-day.

ISLAYEV: Oh, excuse me! . . . I have been absorbed in business. (*Paces the room.*) It is queer. The Russian peasant is very clever, very quick to understand; I respect the Russian peasant. . . . And yet sometimes you tell him something—tell him, explain, and explain. . . . Everything seems clear, but nothing comes of it. The Russian peasant hasn't that . . . that . . .

RAKITIN: Are you still bothering with the dam?

ISLAYEV: That . . . so to speak . . . hasn't that love for his work. That's the point. He hasn't a love for it. He won't let you explain your meaning fully—"I understand, sir . . ." and yet he understood nothing at all. Look at a German—that's another story. The Russian has no patience.—With all that, I respect him. . . . But where is Natasha. Don't you know?

* In Russia friends greet each other and shake hands on their first meeting each day. It is a breach of etiquette to repeat the salutation later.

RAKITIN: She was here just now.

ISLAYEV: And what time is it? It must be time for dinner. I've been on my legs since morning. I've loads of work . . . and yet I haven't looked at the building operations to-day. Time does pass so. It's simply terrific—you can't get anywhere! (RAKITIN *smiles*.) You're laughing at me, I see. . . . But what's to be done, friend? Each to his own business. I'm a matter-of-fact man, born to be a landlord and nothing more. There was a time when I had dreams of something else, but I missed fire, friend. I burnt my fingers—like that!— Why is it Belyayev doesn't come?

RAKITIN: Who is Belyayev?

ISLAYEV: Our new teacher, the Russian. He's a queer lad, but he'll get used to things. He's not a stupid fellow. I asked him to-day to see how the building was getting on. (BELYAYEV *comes in*.) Oh, here he is! Well, how about it? How are they getting along there? They aren't doing a thing, I suppose. Are they?

BELYAYEV: Yes. They are at work.

ISLAYEV: Have they finished the second frame?

BELYAYEV: They have begun on the third.

ISLAYEV: And about the beams? Did you tell them?

BELYAYEV: I did.

ISLAYEV: Well, and what did they say?

BELYAYEV: They say they never have done it in any other fashion.

ISLAYEV: Hm! Is Ermil, the carpenter, there?

BELYAYEV: Yes.

ISLAYEV: Oh! . . . Well, thank you. (NATALYA PETROVNA *comes in*.) Oh, good day, Natasha!

RAKITIN: How is it that to-day you are bidding everybody good day twenty times over?

ISLAYEV: I tell you I got deep in business. Oh, by the way, I haven't shown you my new winnowing fan. Come on, please; it's worth seeing. Just imagine! It makes a hurricane, a regular hurricane. We'll have time before dinner. . . . Want to?

RAKITIN: All right.

ISLAYEV: And Natasha—won't you come with us?

NATALYA PETROVNA: The idea of my understanding anything about your winnowing fans!—You two go on alone and see that you don't get delayed.

ISLAYEV (*going out with RAKITIN*): We'll be back directly. (BELYAYEV *is about to follow them*.)

NATALYA PETROVNA (*to BELYAYEV*): Where are you going, Alexey Nikolayevich.

BELYAYEV: I . . . I . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA: However, if you wish to take a walk—

BELYAYEV: No, I've been in the open air all the morning.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Well, in that case, sit down here. . . . Sit down here. (*She points to a chair.*) You and I have not yet had a real conversation, Alexey Nikolayevich; we've not yet got acquainted. (*BELYAYEV bows and sits down.*) And I want to get acquainted with you.

BELYAYEV: I . . . that is very flattering to me.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*with a smile*): Now you are afraid of me again; I see that. But wait! You will learn to know me and you will stop being afraid of me. Tell me . . . tell me how old you are.

BELYAYEV: Twenty-one, madam.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Are your parents living?

BELYAYEV: My mother is dead; my father is living.

NATALYA PETROVNA: And did your mother pass away long ago?

BELYAYEV: Yes, madam.

NATALYA PETROVNA: But, do you remember her?

BELYAYEV: Of course I remember her.

NATALYA PETROVNA: And is your father living in Moscow?

BELYAYEV: No, madam, in the country.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Well, have you brothers and sisters?

BELYAYEV: One sister.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Do you love her very much?

BELYAYEV: Yes, I do. She is much younger than I.

NATALYA PETROVNA: And what's her name?

BELYAYEV: Natalya.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*with animation*): Natalya? That's queer! My name is Natalya also. (*She pauses.*) And you love her very much?

BELYAYEV: Yes, madam.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Tell me, how do you find my Kolya?

BELYAYEV: He's a very charming boy.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Isn't he? And so affectionate! He's already become attached to you.

BELYAYEV: I try to do my best. . . . I am glad . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA: Now you see, Alexey Nikolayevich, of course I should like to make a man of action out of him. I don't know whether I shall succeed in that, but at any rate I want him always to remember with pleasure the time of his childhood. Let him grow up at liberty—that is the main thing. I myself was educated otherwise, Alexey Nikolayevich. My father, although not an ill-tempered man, was irritable and stern. . . . Every one in the house, beginning with mamma, was afraid of him. My mother and I used to cross ourselves

secretly every time we were summoned to him. Sometimes my father would undertake to caress me, but even in his embraces, I remember, I felt faint all over. My brother grew up, and perhaps you have heard of his rupture with father. . . . I shall never forget that awful day. . . . I remained my father's obedient daughter to the very end. . . . He called me his comfort, his Antigone—he was blind during the last years of his life. But his most tender caresses could not efface from my mind the first impressions of my youth. . . . I was afraid of him, the blind old man, and in his presence I never felt myself free. . . . The traces of this timidity, of this long constraint, perhaps have not yet completely disappeared. . . . I know that at first glance I appear . . . what shall I call it? . . . cold, possibly. . . . But I notice that I am telling you of myself, instead of speaking to you of Kolya. I just want to say that I know of my own experience how good it is for a child to grow up at liberty. . . . Now I think that in your childhood you did not suffer from constraint.

BELYAYEV: How can I tell you? . . . Of course, no one constrained me . . . no one paid any attention to me.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*timidly*): But perhaps, your father—

BELYAYEV: He had no interest in the matter. He was always riding round to our neighbors . . . on business. Or maybe not on business, but . . . He made his living through them, I may say, . . . through his services to them.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Oh, and so no one attended to your education?

BELYAYEV: To tell the truth, no one. However, probably you've noticed that already. I am only too conscious of my own defects.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Perhaps . . . but on the other hand— (*She stops and continues with a certain confusion.*) Oh, by the way, was it you, Alexey Nikolayevich, who was singing in the garden yesterday?

BELYAYEV: When?

NATALYA PETROVNA: In the evening, near the pond.

BELYAYEV: Yes. (*Hastily.*) I did not think . . . the pond is so far from here . . . I did not think that it could be heard here.

NATALYA PETROVNA: And you seem to be excusing yourself? You have a very pleasant, sonorous voice, and you sing so well. Have you studied music?

BELYAYEV: Not a bit. I sing by ear . . . only simple songs.

NATALYA PETROVNA: You sing them splendidly. I shall ask you sometime . . . not now . . . but when you and I get better acquainted, when we become intimate. You see, Alexey Nikolayevich, we shall certainly become intimate, shan't we? I feel confidence in you. My chatter may prove it. . . .

(*She stretches out her hand to him in order that he may press it.* BELYAYEV takes it indecisively and has a certain perplexity in knowing

what to do with that hand; he kisses it. NATALYA PETROVNA blushes and withdraws her hand. At that moment SHPIGELSKY enters from the hall, stops and takes a step backward. NATALYA PETROVNA rises quickly, BELYAYEV also.)

NATALYA PETROVNA (*in confusion*): Oh, is that you, doctor? Alexey Nikolayevich and I are here. (*She stops.*)

SHPIGELSKY (*in a loud, casual tone*): Just imagine, Natalya Petrovna, what things are going on in your household! I went into your servants' room and asked for your sick coachman. Lo and behold! My invalid was sitting at the table and consuming pancakes and onions full speed. After this you can quit studying medicine and relying on disease as an innocent source of income!

NATALYA PETROVNA (*with a forced smile*): Oh, really . . . (BELYAYEV is about to go.) Alexey Nikolayevich, I forgot to tell you. . . . (VERA runs in from the hall.)

VERA: Alexey Nikolayevich, Alexey Nikolayevich! (*She suddenly stops at the sight of NATALYA PETROVNA.*)

NATALYA PETROVNA (*with a certain surprise*): What's all this? What do you want?

VERA (*blushing and lowering her eyes; points to BELYAYEV*): They're calling him.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Who?

VERA: Kolya. That is, Kolya asked me about the kite.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Oh! (*In a low voice to VERA.*) *On n'entre pas comme cela dans une chambre. . . . Cela ne convient pas.* (*Turning to SHPIGELSKY.*) Well, what time is it, doctor? Your watch is always right. . . . Is it time for dinner?

SHPIGELSKY: Just a moment, please. (*Takes his watch from his pocket.*) Now . . . now . . . I may report, it's twenty minutes past four.

NATALYA PETROVNA: So you see, it's time.

(*Goes to the mirror and adjusts her hair; meanwhile VERA whispers something to BELYAYEV. They both laugh. NATALYA PETROVNA sees them in the mirror. SHPIGELSKY takes a sidelong glance at her.*)

BELYAYEV (*laughing softly*): Really?

VERA (*nodding and also in a low voice*): Yes, yes, she just fell.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*with an affected indifference, turning to VERA*): What's that? Who fell?

VERA (*confused*): No . . . Alexey Nikolayevich had made a swing, and then nurse took it into her head—

NATALYA PETROVNA (*without waiting for the end of the answer, to SHPIGELSKY*): Oh, by the way, Shpigelsky, come here. (*She leads him aside and again turns to VERA*): Did she hurt herself?

VERA: Oh, no.

NATALYA PETROVNA: That's good. And yet, Alexey Nikolayevich, you make a mistake to—

MATVEY (*enters from the hall and announces*): Dinner is served.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Oh, where is Arkady Sergeich? He and Mikhaylo Alexandrovich will be late again.

MATVEY: They are already in the dining-room.

NATALYA PETROVNA: And mamma?

MATVEY: She is in the dining-room also.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Oh, very well. Come on! (*Pointing to BELYAYEV.*) Vera, *allez en avant avec monsieur.*

(*MATVEY goes out, followed by BELYAYEV and VERA.*)

SHPIGELSKY (*to NATALYA PETROVNA*): Did you wish to say anything to me?

NATALYA PETROVNA: Oh, yes! To be sure. . . . Now you see . . . I'll speak to you later about . . . about your proposal.

SHPIGELSKY: In regard to . . . Vera Alexandrovna?

NATALYA PETROVNA: Yes. I'll think it over. . . . I'll think it over.

(*Both go out into the hall.*)

ACT II

A garden. On the right and left, under the trees, benches. Center a raspberry patch. KATYA and MATVEY come in from the right. KATYA has a basket in her hands.

MATVEY: Well, then, Katerina Vasilyevna. Will you please explain yourself? I earnestly beg you to.

KATYA: Why really, Matvey Egorych . . .

MATVEY: You know only too well, Katerina Vasilyevna, what my attitude is towards you. Of course, I am older than you. There is no dispute about that, but all the same I can still look out for myself. I am still in the very prime of life, and also, as you perfectly well know, I am of a gentle disposition, so what more do you want?

KATYA: Believe me, Matvey Egorych, I appreciate it very much. I am very grateful, Matvey Egorych. . . . But you see . . . I think I had better wait.

MATVEY: But what shall we wait for, pray, Katerina Vasilyevna? Formerly, if you will permit me to remark, you did not talk in this way, and as for showing you due respect, I think I may vouch for myself. You will receive such respect, Katerina Vasilyevna, that you could ask for nothing better. Besides that, I don't drink, and I have never heard any reproaches from the gentlefolk.

KATYA: Really, Matvey Egorych, I don't know what to say to you. . . .

MATVEY: Oh, Katerina Vasilyevna, a little while ago you began to be . . .

KATYA (*with a slight blush*): A little while ago? Why so?

MATVEY: I really don't know. . . . Only before . . . before you behaved quite differently towards me.

KATYA (*looking hastily off stage*): Look out! . . . The German is coming.

MATVEY (*with vexation*): Plague take him, the long-nosed donkey! . . . But I'll have further conversation with you later.

(*Goes out to the right. KATYA also is about to go into the raspberry patch. SCHAAF comes in from the left with a fishing rod on his shoulder.*)

SCHAAF (*calling after KATYA*): Vere to, vere to, Caterin?

KATYA (*stopping*): They told me to pick some raspberries, Adam Ivanovich.

SCHAAF: Raspberriess? . . . Raspberriess are a pleasant fruit. You luf raspberriess?

KATYA: Yes, I do.

SCHAAF: Hee, hee! . . . I do . . . I do too. I luf every sing zat you luf. (*Seeing that she is about to leave.*) Oh, Caterin, wait a bit.

KATYA: No time. . . . The housekeeper will scold me.

SCHAAF: Oh, zat's all right. Now I am going to . . . (*Pointing to his fishing rod.*) I am going vat you say, you understant, fishing, zat is, catching fish. You like zem, fish?

KATYA: Yes.

SCHAAF: Eh, hee, hee! So do I. So do I. And let me tell you, Caterin. . . . In German zere is a song (*Sings.*) *Cathrinchen, Cathrinchen, wie lieb' ich dich so sehr!* Zat iss in Russian: Oh, Caterin, Caterin, you are pretty, I luf you. (*Tries to embrace her with one arm.*)

KATYA: Stop! Stop! Aren't you ashamed! . . . And here comes the mistress! (*Takes refuge in the raspberry patch.*)

SCHAAF (*assuming a stern air, in a low voice*): *Das ist dumm.* . . .

(*NATALYA PETROVNA comes in from the right, arm in arm with RAKITIN.*)

NATALYA PETROVNA (*to SCHAAF*): Oh, Adam Ivanovich, are you going fishing?

SCHAAF: Yoost so!

NATALYA PETROVNA: And where is Kolya?

SCHAAF: Mit Lissavet Bogdanovna. . . . A lesson on ze piano. . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA: Oh! (*Looking around.*) Are you alone here?

SCHAAF: Yes, ma'am.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Haven't you seen Alexey Nikolayevich?

SCHAAF: Not at all.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*after a pause*): Let's go on together, Adam Ivanovich, shan't we? We'll watch you fish.

SCHAAF: I am very glad.

RAKITIN (*in a low voice to NATALYA PETROVNA*): What an idea!

NATALYA PETROVNA (*to RAKITIN*): Come on, come on, *beau ténébreux*. (*All three go out to the right.*)

KATYA (*cautiously putting her head out of the raspberry patch*): They have gone. (*She comes out, pauses for a moment, and falls to thinking.*) That German! . . . (*Sighs, and again begins to pick raspberries, humming in a low voice.*)

The fire does not burn, the pitch does not boil
But there boils and there burns my eager heart. . . .

Matvey Egorych was certainly right! (*Continues to hum.*)

But there boils and there burns my eager heart;
And not for my father, not for my mother dear . . .

(*Stops singing and exclaims.*) What huge raspberries! (*Continues to hum.*)

Not for my father, not for my mother dear . . .

How hot it is! Absolutely suffocating. (*Continues to hum.*)

Not for my father, not for my mother dear:
It boils and it burns—

(*Suddenly she looks around, stops singing, and half hides herself behind a bush. BELYAYEV and VEROCHKA come in from the left. BELYAYEV has a kite in his hands.*)

BELYAYEV (*walking past the raspberry patch, to KATYA*): Why do you stop, Katya? (*He sings.*)

But it boils and burns for a maiden fair.

KATYA (*blushing*): That's not the way we sing it.

BELYAYEV: Well, how do you? (*KATYA laughs and does not answer.*) What are you doing, picking raspberries? Let me try some.

KATYA (*giving him the basket*): Take 'em all.

BELYAYEV: Why all of them? . . . Vera Alexandrovna, will you have some? (*Both VERA and he take some from the basket.*) Well, that's enough. (*Tries to give back the basket to KATYA.*)

KATYA (*pushing away his hand*): Take 'em all, take 'em.

BELYAYEV: No, thank you, Katya. (*He gives her back the basket.*) Thank you. (*To VERA.*) Vera Alexandrovna, let's sit down on the

bench. (*Pointing to the kite.*) We must tie on the tail. You'll help me. (*They both go and sit down on the bench. BELYAYEV hands her the kite.*) That's the way. Now look out, hold it straight. (*He begins to tie on the tail.*) What are you doing?

VERA: Put that away! I can't see you.

BELYAYEV: And what do you want to see me for?

VERA: I mean, I want to see how you tie on the tail.

BELYAYEV: Oh, well, stand still. (*He arranges the kite so that she can see him.*) Katya, why don't you sing? Go ahead. (*In a moment KATYA begins to hum in a low voice.*)

VERA: Tell me, Alexey Nikolayevich, do you sometimes fly kites in Moscow too?

BELYAYEV: No time for kites in Moscow! Hold the cord! . . . That's the way. Do you think we haven't anything else to do in Moscow?

VERA: What do you do in Moscow?

BELYAYEV: What do we do? We study and listen to the professors.

VERA: What do they teach you?

BELYAYEV: Everything.

VERA: You must be a very good student. Best of all of them.

BELYAYEV: No, not very good. Very far from the best! I'm lazy.

VERA: Why are you lazy?

BELYAYEV: Lord knows! I must have been born so.

VERA (*after a pause*): Well, have you some student friends in Moscow?

BELYAYEV: Of course. Oh, that cord isn't strong enough.

VERA: And do you love them?

BELYAYEV: Certainly! . . . Don't you love your friends among the boys?

VERA: Among the boys? I haven't any friends among them.

BELYAYEV: I meant to say, your girl friends.

VERA (*slowly*): Yes.

BELYAYEV: You have girl friends?

VERA: Yes, only—I don't know why—for some time I haven't been thinking much about them. I haven't even answered Liza Moshnin and she so urged me in her last letter.

BELYAYEV: What do you mean by saying that you haven't any boy friends? . . . Where do I come in?

VERA (*with a smile*): Oh, you . . . you are another story. (*After a pause.*) Alexey Nikolayevich!

BELYAYEV: What?

VERA: Do you write poetry?

BELYAYEV: No. Why do you ask?

VERA: No special reason. (*After a pause.*) In our pension one young lady wrote verses.

BELYAYEV (*pulling a knot with his teeth*): Well, well, were they good ones?

VERA: I don't know. She used to read them to us and we wept.

BELYAYEV: Why did you weep?

VERA: For sorrow. We were so sorry for her!

BELYAYEV: Were you educated in Moscow?

VERA: Yes, at Mrs. Bolus's. Natalya Petrovna took me from there last year.

BELYAYEV: Do you love Natalya Petrovna?

VERA: Yes, she is so kind. I love her very much.

BELYAYEV (*with a grin*): And you are afraid of her, I suppose?

VERA (*also with a grin*): A little bit.

BELYAYEV (*after a pause*): And who put you in the pension?

VERA: Natalya Petrovna's mother, who is now dead. I grew up in her house. I am an orphan.

BELYAYEV (*letting his hands fall*): You are an orphan? And you don't remember either your father or your mother?

VERA: No.

BELYAYEV: And my mother is dead, too. We are both of us orphans. What can we do about it? But anyhow we needn't be cast down.

VERA: They say that orphans make friends with each other very quickly.

BELYAYEV (*looking into her eyes*): Really, what do you think about it?

VERA (*also looking into his eyes with a smile*): I think they do.

BELYAYEV (*Laughing, and again applying himself to the kite*): I should like to know how long I have been in these parts.

VERA: To-day is the twenty-eighth day.

BELYAYEV: What a memory you have! Well, here's the kite finished. Just see what a tail! We must go for Kolya.

KATYA (*coming up to them with a basket*): Will you have some more raspberries?

BELYAYEV: No, thank you, Katya. (KATYA *silently moves away*.)

VERA: Kolya is with Lizaveta Bogdanovna.

BELYAYEV: They must like to keep a child indoors in such weather.

VERA: Lizaveta Bogdanovna would just be in our way.

BELYAYEV: I am not talking about her.

VERA (*hastily*): Kolya couldn't come with us without her. . . . By the way, she spoke of you in a very complimentary fashion yesterday.

BELYAYEV: Really!

VERA: You don't like her?

BELYAYEV: Plague take her. Let her take snuff, and much good may it do her! . . . Why are you sighing?

VERA (*after a pause*): I don't know. How bright the sky is!

BELYAYEV: Is that what makes you sigh? (*Silence.*) Maybe you feel lonesome.

VERA: Me, lonesome? No! I never know myself why I sigh. . . . I am not lonesome at all. On the contrary. . . . (*After a pause.*) . . . I don't know. I probably am not in perfect health. Yesterday I went upstairs for a book and all of a sudden—just imagine!—I sat down on a step and began to cry. . . . God knows why. . . . and for a long time after tears kept coming into my eyes. What does that mean? And yet I feel very well.

BELYAYEV: That is because you are growing. You are growing up. Such things happen. . . . That's true: yesterday evening your eyes looked swollen.

VERA: Did you notice it?

BELYAYEV: Certainly.

VERA: You notice everything.

BELYAYEV: Oh, no! . . . Not everything.

VERA (*pensively*): Alexey Nikolayevich. . . .

BELYAYEV: What?

VERA (*after a pause*): What was it that I wanted to ask you any way? I've really forgotten what I wanted to ask.

BELYAYEV: You are so absent-minded.

VERA: No. . . . but. . . . oh, yes! Here's what I wanted to ask you. You were telling me you have a sister?

BELYAYEV: Yes.

VERA: Tell me, am I like her?

BELYAYEV: Oh, no! You are a lot nicer than she.

VERA: Impossible! Your sister. . . . I should like to be in her place.

BELYAYEV: What? You would like to be in our little house now?

VERA: I didn't mean that. . . . Is your house a little one?

BELYAYEV: Very little. . . . Not like this one here.

VERA: But what's the use of so many rooms?

BELYAYEV: What's the use of them? You'll find out in due time what the use of rooms is.

VERA: In due time? . . . When?

BELYAYEV: When you become a housewife yourself.

VERA (*pensively*): Do you think so?

BELYAYEV: You will see. (*After a pause.*) Well then, shall we go for Kolya, Vera Alexandrovna? Shall we?

VERA: Why don't you call me Verochka?

BELYAYEV: And can you really call me Alexey?

VERA: Why not? . . . (*With a sudden start.*) Oh!

BELYAYEV: What's the matter?

VERA (*in a low voice*): Natalya Petrovna is coming this way.

BELYAYEV (*also in a low voice*): Where?

VERA (*indicating with her head*): Along the path there with Mikhaylo Alexandrovich.

BELYAYEV (*rising*): Let's go to Kolya. . . . He must have finished his lesson by this time.

VERA: Come on! Otherwise I'm afraid she'll scold me.

(*They both rise and go out quickly to the left. KATYA again hides in the raspberry patch. NATALYA PETROVNA and RAKITIN come in from the right.*)

NATALYA PETROVNA (*stopping*): I think that's Mr. Belyayev going out with Verochka.

RAKITIN: Yes, it's they.

NATALYA PETROVNA: They seem to be running away from us.

RAKITIN: Perhaps.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*after a pause*): However, I don't think that Verochka ought . . . to be alone with a young man in the garden in this way. . . . Of course she's a child but all the same it isn't proper. I'll tell her.

RAKITIN: How old is she?

NATALYA PETROVNA: Seventeen. She's already seventeen. . . . How warm it is to-day! I'm tired. Let's sit down. (*They both sit down on the bench where VERA and BELYAYEV have been sitting.*) . . . Has Shpigelsky gone?

RAKITIN: Yes.

NATALYA PETROVNA: You made a mistake not to keep him. I don't know how that man got the idea of becoming a country doctor. . . . He's very amusing. He makes me laugh.

RAKITIN: But I imagine that you are not in a laughing humor to-day.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Why do you think so?

RAKITIN: Just a fancy!

NATALYA PETROVNA: Is it because to-day I dislike everything sentimental? Oh yes, I forewarn you: to-day absolutely nothing can touch my emotions. . . . But that doesn't keep me from laughing. . . . Besides, I needed to have a talk with Shpigelsky.

RAKITIN: May I inquire—what about?

NATALYA PETROVNA: No, you may not. Anyhow, you know everything that I think . . . that I do. That's tiresome.

RAKITIN: Excuse me! . . . I did not suppose . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA: I should like to conceal at least some one little thing from you.

RAKITIN: Good gracious. From your words I might infer that I knew everything. . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA (*interrupting him*): And don't you?

RAKITIN: You seem to enjoy laughing at me.

NATALYA PETROVNA: So really don't you know everything that goes on within me? In that case I don't congratulate you. Impossible! A man observes me from morning till evening—

RAKITIN: What's that? A reproach?

NATALYA PETROVNA: A reproach? (*After a pause.*) I now see clearly: you are not a man of penetration.

RAKITIN. Perhaps not. . . . But since I observe you from morning till evening, permit me to make one remark to you. . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA: In regard to me? Pray do so.

RAKITIN: You won't be angry with me?

NATALYA PETROVNA: Oh, no! I should like to be, but I shan't.

RAKITIN: For some time, Natalya Petrovna, you have been in a sort of constantly irritated condition and this irritation of yours is involuntary, from within. You seem to be struggling with yourself, seem to be in perplexity. Before my trip to the Krinitsyns' I did not observe this. It is of recent date with you. (NATALYA PETROVNA *draws figures on the ground with her parasol.*) Sometimes you sigh so deeply . . . just as a weary, a very weary person sighs, a person who never has a chance to take a rest.

NATALYA PETROVNA: What conclusion do you form from that, Mr. Observer?

RAKITIN: None at all. . . . But this disquiets me.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Thank you humbly for your sympathy.

RAKITIN: And besides—

NATALYA PETROVNA (*with a certain impatience*): Please let's change the subject.

(*Silence.*)

RAKITIN: You don't intend to take a ride anywhere to-day?

NATALYA PETROVNA: No.

RAKITIN: Why not? The weather's fine.

NATALYA PETROVNA: I'm too lazy. (*Silence.*) Tell me. . . . You are acquainted with Bolshintsov?

RAKITIN: Our neighbor, Afanasy Ivanovich?

NATALYA PETROVNA: Yes.

RAKITIN: What a question! Only day before yesterday you and I were playing preference with him.

NATALYA PETROVNA: What kind of a man is he, I should like to know.

RAKITIN: Bolshintsov?

NATALYA PETROVNA: Yes, yes, Bolshintsov.

RAKITIN: Well, I must confess, I never expected this.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*with impatience*): What didn't you expect?

RAKITIN: That you would ever ask me about Bolshintsov! He is a stupid, fat, heavy man, and yet one can't say anything bad about him.

NATALYA PETROVNA: He is by no means so stupid and so heavy as you think.

RAKITIN: Maybe. I confess I haven't studied that gentleman with any great attention.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*ironically*): You haven't been observing *him*?

RAKITIN (*with a forced smile*): How did you get that idea?

NATALYA PETROVNA: Just a fancy! (*Again a silence.*)

RAKITIN: Look, Natalya Petrovna, how beautiful that dark-green oak is against the dark-blue sky! It is all bathed in the sunbeams—and what vivid colors! . . . How much indomitable life and force there is in it, especially when you compare it with that young birch. . . . The birch seems already to vanish in the radiance; its little leaves gleam with a sort of moist luster, as if they were melting, and yet the birch also is beautiful. . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA: Let me tell you, Rakitin. I long ago noticed this trait in you: You have a very keen sense for the so-called beauties of nature, and you speak of them very elegantly, very cleverly . . . so elegantly, so cleverly, that I imagine nature ought to be inexpressibly grateful to you for your aptly-turned expressions. You pay court to it as a perfumed marquis with red-heeled shoes does to a pretty peasant girl. . . . Only here's the trouble: it occasionally seems to me that nature could not in the least understand or appreciate your acute observations, just as the peasant girl would not understand the elegant courtesies of the marquis. Nature is far simpler, even coarser, than you suppose, because, thank God, it is healthy. . . . Birches do not melt and do not faint away like nervous ladies.

RAKITIN: *Quelle tirade!* Nature is healthy. That is, in other words, I am a sickly creature.

NATALYA PETROVNA: You are not the only sickly creature. Both you and I are by no means healthy.

RAKITIN: Oh, I know very well that method of telling another person the most unpleasant things in the most inoffensive fashion. . . . Instead of telling him straight to his face, for instance: "My boy, you are stupid," you merely have to remark to him with a good-natured smile, "You see, both of us are stupid."

NATALYA PETROVNA: Are you taking offense? Stop! What nonsense! I only meant that both of us . . . you don't like the word "sickly" . . . that both of us are old, very old.

RAKITIN: Why old? That's not my opinion of myself.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Well, anyway, listen to me. Here you and I

are sitting now . . . perhaps on the very same bench on which a quarter of an hour ago there were sitting . . . two genuinely young creatures.

RAKITIN: Belyayev and Verochka? Of course they are younger than we are. . . . Between us and them there is a few years' difference, that is all. . . . But that doesn't make us old yet awhile.

NATALYA PETROVNA: The difference between us is not in years alone.

RAKITIN: Oh, I understand. You envy their . . . naïveté and freshness and innocence . . . in a word, their stupidity. . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA: You think so? Ah! You think they are stupid? I see that you regard every one as stupid to-day. No, you don't understand me. And besides . . . stupid! Where's the harm in that? What's the use of intellect when it isn't amusing? . . . There's nothing more wearisome than melancholy intellect.

RAKITIN: Hm. . . . Why won't you say straight out, without beating around the bush, that I don't amuse you? That's what you really mean. . . . And why do you make intellect in general suffer for my sins?

NATALYA PETROVNA: You take everything wrong. . . . (KATYA comes out of the raspberry patch.) Well, have you picked the raspberries, Katya?

KATYA: Yes, madam.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Show them to me. . . . (KATYA comes up to her.) Splendid raspberries! What a bright color! . . . But your cheeks are still brighter. (KATYA smiles and lowers her eyes.) Well, go along. (KATYA goes out.)

RAKITIN: There is one more young creature to your taste.

NATALYA PETROVNA: To be sure. (She rises.)

RAKITIN: Where are you going?

NATALYA PETROVNA: In the first place I want to see what Verochka is doing. It's time for her to be going indoors. . . . And in the second place I must confess that I don't specially like our conversation. It would be better for a while to cut short our discussion of nature and youth.

RAKITIN: Maybe you would like to have a walk alone?

NATALYA PETROVNA: To tell the truth, I should. We'll soon see each other again. . . . All the same, we part friends, do we not? (Extends her hand to him.)

RAKITIN: Of course. (Presses her hand.)

NATALYA PETROVNA: Au revoir. (She opens her parasol and goes out to the left.)

RAKITIN (walks for some time back and forth): What's the matter with her? (After a pause.) Just a caprice. Caprice? I've never before thought her capricious. On the contrary, I don't know a woman

of more equable temper. What's the reason? . . . (*He paces back and forth again and suddenly stops.*) Oh, how ridiculous people are who have only one thought in their head, one aim, one occupation in life! . . . Take me, for example. She told the truth: from morning till evening you observe trifles and so you become trifling yourself. . . . That's all true, but I can't live without her. In her presence I am more than happy. This feeling cannot be called mere happiness. I belong to her entirely. To part from her would be just as difficult for me, without any exaggeration, as to part with life itself. What's the matter with her? What is the meaning of that inner emotion, that involuntary bitterness of expression. Am I not beginning to bore her? Hm. (*He sits down.*) I have never deceived myself. I know very well in what way she loves me, but I hoped that this calm feeling would in the course of time . . . I hoped! Have I the right, may I dare to hope? I confess my position is ridiculous enough . . . almost contemptible. (*After a pause.*) Well, what's the use of such words? She's an honorable woman and I am not a Lovelace. (*With a bitter smile.*) Unfortunately. (*Rising quickly.*) Well, that's enough! I must get all this nonsense out of my head. (*Walking up and down.*) What a splendid day this is! (*After a pause.*) How cleverly she wounded me! . . . My "aptly-turned expressions"! . . . She is very, very shrewd, especially when she is out of spirits. And what a sudden adoration for simplicity and innocence! . . . That Russian teacher! . . . She often speaks to me of him. I confess I don't see anything special in him. He is simply a student like other students. Is it possible that she . . . ? Impossible! She is out of spirits. . . . She doesn't know herself what she wants, and so she scratches me. Even children beat their nurse. . . . What a happy comparison! But I don't want to hinder her. When this attack of uneasiness and disquiet is over she will be the first to laugh at that lanky fledgling, at that unspoiled youth. . . . Your explanation is not bad, Mikhaylo Alexandrovich, my friend. But is it correct? The Lord knows! We'll see later. It has often happened, my dear fellow, that after long debate with yourself, you have suddenly had to renounce all suppositions and surmises, fold your arms calmly and wait humbly to see what would happen. And meanwhile, confess that you are in a decidedly embarrassing and bitter position. . . . Such is your trade now. . . . (*Looking around.*) But here he comes himself, our unspoiled youth. . . . He has arrived just in time . . . I haven't had a single conversation with him worth mentioning. Let's see what sort of man he is. (*BELYAYEV comes in from the left.*) Oh, Alexey Nikolayevich, have you been out walking in the fresh air?

BELYAYEV: Yes.

RAKITIN: That is to say, we must confess the air to-day isn't alto-

gether fresh: it's frightfully hot. But here under these linden trees in the shade it's bearable enough. (*After a pause.*) Have you seen Natalya Petrovna?

BELYAYEV: I just met her. . . . She and Vera Alexandrovna have gone into the house.

RAKITIN: But wasn't it Vera Alexandrovna that I saw here a half hour ago?

BELYAYEV: Yes. . . . I was strolling with her.

RAKITIN: Ah! (*Takes his arm.*) Well, how do you like life in the country?

BELYAYEV: I like the country. The only trouble is that the hunting here is poor.

RAKITIN: Are you a sportsman?

BELYAYEV: Yes. And you?

RAKITIN: I? No, I must confess I am a poor shot. I am too lazy.

BELYAYEV: And I am lazy too . . . only not about walking.

RAKITIN: Oh! Are you lazy about reading?

BELYAYEV: No, I like to read. I am lazy about working for a long time at a stretch; I am especially lazy about applying myself continuously to one and the same subject.

RAKITIN (*smiling*): As for instance, conversing with the ladies?

BELYAYEV: Oh! You are laughing at me. . . . I am generally afraid of the ladies.

RAKITIN (*slightly confused*): Why did you think . . . ? Why should I make fun of you?

BELYAYEV: Just a fancy. Where's the harm! (*After a pause.*) Tell me, where can I get powder here?

RAKITIN: In the town, I think. They sell it there under the name of poppy seed. Do you need good powder?

BELYAYEV: No, musket powder will do. I don't want to shoot. I want to make some fireworks.

RAKITIN: What, do you know how?

BELYAYEV: I do. And I have already chosen a place on the other side of the pond. I've heard that next week will come the name day of Natalya Petrovna, and so fireworks would be appropriate.

RAKITIN: Natalya Petrovna will be much pleased at such an attention on your part. . . . She likes you, Alexey Nikolayevich, let me tell you.

BELYAYEV: That is very flattering for me. . . . Oh, by the way, Mikhaylo Alexandrovich, I think you receive a magazine. Could you lend it to me?

RAKITIN: Certainly, with pleasure. . . . It contains good poetry

BELYAYEV: I'm not fond of poetry.

RAKITIN: Why not?

BELYAYEV: I just am not. Humorous poetry seems to me forced; and besides, there is very little of it. . . . And sentimental verse . . . Somehow I don't believe in it.

RAKITIN: Do you prefer stories?

BELYAYEV: Yes. I like good stories. . . . But critical articles, those are what take hold of me.

RAKITIN: Why so?

BELYAYEV: A man of heart writes those.

RAKITIN: And you yourself do not cultivate literature?

BELYAYEV: Oh, no! What's the use of writing if God has given you no talent? It only makes people laugh. And besides, here is what is surprising; here is what you must explain to me, if you please: Sometimes a man seems clever, but when he takes up a pen you have to call the fire department. No, what's the use of our writing? Lord help us to understand what other people write!

RAKITIN: Let me tell you, Alexey Nikolayevich, not many young men have as much common sense as you have.

BELYAYEV: Thank you humbly for the compliment. (*After a pause.*) I have selected a place for the fireworks the other side of the pond, because I know how to make Roman candles that burn on water.

RAKITIN: That must be very beautiful. Excuse me, Alexey Nikolayevich . . . but permit me to ask you . . . do you know French?

BELYAYEV: No. I translated a novel of Paul du Kock, *The Milkmaid of Montfermeil*—maybe you have heard of it—for fifty rubles paper money, but I don't know a word of French. Just imagine, I translated *quatre-vingt dix* as four twenty ten! . . . Poverty, you know, forced me to. But I'm sorry. I should like to know French. I should like to read George Sand in French. But that pronunciation! How can you expect me to manage it? *An, on, in, un.* . . . Isn't it awful?

RAKITIN: Well, we can help that trouble.

BELYAYEV: Permit me to inquire what time it is?

RAKITIN (*looking at his watch*): Half past one.

BELYAYEV: Why is it that Lizaveta Bogdanovna is keeping Kolya at the piano for so long? . . . I think he must want awfully to have a run.

RAKITIN (*in a kind tone*): But yet people must study, Alexey Nikolayevich.

BELYAYEV (*with a sigh*): It's not for you to say that, Mikhaylo Alexandrovich, or for me to listen to it. . . . Of course not everybody should be as shiftless as I.

RAKITIN: Oh, stop!

BELYAYEV: I know very well what I am talking about.

RAKITIN: But, on the contrary, I know quite as well—I am convinced—that the very quality which you regard as a defect in yourself, your

lack of constraint, your ease of manner, is what makes you liked by people.

BELYAYEV: By whom, for example?

RAKITIN: Well, by Natalya Petrovna, for instance.

BELYAYEV: Natalya Petrovna? But I do not feel myself at ease with her, as you say.

RAKITIN: Oh, really?

BELYAYEV: And finally, if you please, Mikhaylo Alexandrovich, is not education the matter of first importance for a man? It is easy for you to speak. . . . I really don't understand you. . . . (*Suddenly stopping.*) What's that? I thought I heard a rail call in the garden. (*Is about to leave.*)

RAKITIN: Perhaps. . . . But where are you going?

BELYAYEV: For my gun.

(*He goes off to the left. NATALYA PETROVNA meets him. Seeing him, she smiles suddenly.*)

NATALYA PETROVNA: Where are you going, Alexey Nikolayevich?

BELYAYEV: I . . .

RAKITIN: For his gun. . . . He heard a rail in the garden. . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA: No, please don't shoot in the garden. . . . Let the poor bird live. . . . Besides that, you may scare grandmother.

BELYAYEV: I obey.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*laughing*): Oh, Alexey Nikolayevich, aren't you ashamed? "I obey." What an expression! . . . How can you speak that way? But wait, Mikhaylo Alexandrovich and I will attend to your education. Yes, yes. . . . We have already spoken of you several times. . . . We have a conspiracy against you. I warn you. Will you permit me to attend to your education?

BELYAYEV: Why . . . I . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA: In the first place, don't be so bashful. That is not becoming to you at all. Yes, we will take charge of you. (*Pointing to RAKITIN.*) He and I are old people—and you are a young man. . . . Isn't that so? You'll see how well everything turns out. You will attend to Kolya and I . . . and we will attend to you.

BELYAYEV: I shall be very grateful to you.

NATALYA PETROVNA: That's right. What were you talking about here with Mikhaylo Alexandrovich?

RAKITIN (*smiling*): He was telling me how he translated a French book without knowing a word of French.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Well, then, we'll teach you French too. And by the way, what have you done with your kite?

BELYAYEV: I took it to my room. It seemed to me that you . . . did not like it.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*with a certain confusion*): How did you get that idea? Because I said to Verochka . . . because I took Verochka into the house? No, that . . . no, you made a mistake. (*With animation.*) However, let me tell you: Kolya must have finished his lesson by this time. Let's go and get him and Verochka and the kite, will you? And we'll all go to the meadow together. Shall we?

BELYAYEV: With pleasure, Natalya Petrovna.

NATALYA PETROVNA: That's fine! Well, come on, come on! (*Stretches out her hand to him.*) Oh, take my hand! How clumsy you are! Come on, hurry up! (*They go out quickly to the left.*)

RAKITIN (*gazing after them*): What animation . . . what gayety! I have never seen such an expression on her face. And what a sudden change! (*After a pause.*) *Souvent femme varie*. . . . But I . . . it is evident that to-day I don't suit her. That's clear. (*After a pause.*) Well, we'll see what comes next. (*Slowly.*) Is it possible that . . . ? (*Waves his hand.*) Impossible! . . . But that smile, that affable, soft, radiant expression! . . . Oh, Lord forbid that I should experience the torments of jealousy, especially senseless jealousy! (*Looking around.*) Bah, bah, bah! . . . And what brought them? (*From the left SHPIGELSKY and BOLSHINTSOV come in. RAKITIN goes to meet them.*) How do you do, gentlemen. . . . I must confess, Shpigelsky, I didn't expect you to-day. (*Shakes hands with them.*)

SHPIGELSKY: And I, myself . . . I myself had no such idea. . . . But you see, I called on him (*Pointing to BOLSHINTSOV.*) and he was already sitting in his carriage, starting for this house. Well, I immediately turned right-about-face and came back here.

RAKITIN: Well, you are welcome.

BOLSHINTSOV: I was really preparing to—

SHPIGELSKY (*shutting him off*): The servants told us that the ladies and gentlemen were in the garden. . . . At any rate, there was no one in the drawing-room.

RAKITIN: But didn't you meet Natalya Petrovna?

SHPIGELSKY: When?

RAKITIN: Why, just now.

SHPIGELSKY: No, we didn't come straight from the house. Afanasy Ivanovich wanted to see whether there were any mushrooms in the grove.

BOLSHINTSOV (*perplexed*): I . . .

SHPIGELSKY: Well, we know that you are a great lover of birch mushrooms. So Natalya Petrovna has gone indoors. Well, then we may return.

BOLSHINTSOV: Of course.

RAKITIN: But she went indoors to call all of them to go for a walk. . . . I think they were going to fly the kite.

SHPIGELSKY: Oh, splendid. In such weather you must stroll about the country.

RAKITIN: You can stay here. . . . I'll go and tell her that you've arrived.

SHPIGELSKY: But why trouble yourself? . . . Pray don't, Mikhaylo Alexandrovich.

RAKITIN: Oh, I need to go there anyway.

SHPIGELSKY: Oh, well, in that case, we won't detain you. . . . Without ceremony, you know. . . .

RAKITIN: Good-by for the moment, gentlemen. (*Goes out to the left.*)

SHPIGELSKY: Good-by. (*To BOLSHINTSOV.*) Well, Afanasy Ivanovich?

BOLSHINTSOV (*interrupting him*): How did you get that idea about mushrooms, Ignaty Ilyich? . . . I'm astonished. What mushrooms?

SHPIGELSKY: I suppose I ought to have said that my friend Afanasy Ivanovich got scared, and didn't want to come the straight road, but begged to take a bypath.

BOLSHINTSOV: That's the truth. . . . But all the same, mushrooms! . . . I don't know. Maybe I'm mistaken. . . .

SHPIGELSKY: You're certainly mistaken, my friend. Here's what you had better reflect on. You see, you and I have come here. We've done what you wished. Look out that you don't make a fizzle of it!

BOLSHINTSOV: But, Ignaty Ilyich, you . . . you told me that . . . That is, I should like to know positively what answer . . .

SHPIGELSKY: My most respected Afanasy Ivanovich! From your village to this place is at least ten miles. Every half mile at least you have asked me the same question three times over. . . . Isn't that enough for you? Now listen, I'll humor you just this last time. Here's what Natalya Petrovna told me: "I . . ."

BOLSHINTSOV (*nodding*): Yes.

SHPIGELSKY (*with veneration*): "Yes" . . . well, why "Yes"? I haven't said anything to you yet. . . . "I am little acquainted with Mr. Bolshintsov," she told me, "but he seems to me a good man. On the other hand, I have no intention of putting pressure on Verochka, and so let him come to see us, and if he wins—"

BOLSHINTSOV: "Wins"? Did she say "wins"?

SHPIGELSKY: "If he wins her regard, Anna Semenovna and I will not interpose objections."

BOLSHINTSOV: "Will not interpose objections"? Is that what she said? "Will not interpose objections"?

SHPIGELSKY: Oh, yes, yes, yes. What a queer man you are. "We will not interpose objections to their happiness."

BOLSHINTSOV: Hm.

SHPIGELSKY: "To their happiness." Yes, but observe, Afanasy Ivanovich, what your problem is now. . . . Now you need to convince Vera Alexandrovna herself that a marriage with you will be happiness for her. You need to win her regard.

BOLSHINTSOV (*blinking*): Yes, yes. Win . . . To be sure, I agree with you.

SHPIGELSKY: You insisted that I should bring you here to-day. . . . Well, let's see how you will get down to work.

BOLSHINTSOV: Get down to work? Yes, yes, I must get down to work; I must win her regard. Only here's the point, Ignaty Ilyich. . . . I must confess to you my single weakness, since you are my best friend. I desired, as you have said, to have you bring me here to-day.

SHPIGELSKY: You didn't desire it. You demanded it. You demanded it insistently.

BOLSHINTSOV: Well, let's suppose so. . . . I agree with you. But just see here. At home I really . . . at home I was ready for everything, I think, but now timidity overcomes me.

SHPIGELSKY: But why are you timid?

BOLSHINTSOV (*looking at him in an embarrassed fashion*): The risk.

SHPIGELSKY: Wha-at?

BOLSHINTSOV: The risk. It's a great risk. Ignaty Ilyich, I must confess to you that . . .

SHPIGELSKY (*interrupting him*): "As to your best friend." I know, I know. . . . Next?

BOLSHINTSOV: Quite so. I agree with you. I must confess to you, Ignaty Ilyich, that I . . . that in general, I have had only slight contact with the female sex in general, so to speak. I confess to you openly, Ignaty Ilyich, that I simply cannot imagine what you can talk about with a person of the female sex, and besides that, all alone . . . especially with a girl.

SHPIGELSKY: You surprise me! I don't know what you *can't* talk about with a person of the female sex, especially with a girl, and especially all alone.

BOLSHINTSOV: Yes, but you . . . consider what a difference there is between you and me. Now, on this occasion, I should like to ask your help, Ignaty Ilyich. They say that in these matters it is the first step that counts. So couldn't you tell me something to serve as an introduction to the conversation? Some little word. Something pleasant, in the nature of a remark, for instance—and then I'll go to meet them. After that, I'll manage it myself, somehow.

SHPIGELSKY: I can't tell you any little word, Afanasy Ivanovich, be-

cause no word will be of any use to you. . . . But I can give you some advice, if you wish:

BOLSHINTSOV: Be kind enough to do so, sir. . . . And as for my gratitude . . . You know . . .

SHPIGELSKY: Stop, stop! Am I driving a bargain with you?

BOLSHINTSOV (*lowering his voice*): You may rest easy about that team of three horses.

SHPIGELSKY: Oh, do stop! Now you see, Afanasy Ivanovich. . . . Without any dispute, you are a splendid man in all respects . . . (BOLSHINTSOV *makes a slight bow.*) a man of excellent qualities.

BOLSHINTSOV: Oh, pray don't!

SHPIGELSKY: And, besides, I believe you have three hundred serfs.

BOLSHINTSOV: Three hundred and twenty.

SHPIGELSKY: Not mortgaged.

BOLSHINTSOV: I am not a single kopek in debt.

SHPIGELSKY: Well, you see, I told you you were a most excellent man, and a suitor of the finest kind. Well then, you say yourself that you have associated little with ladies. . . .

BOLSHINTSOV (*with a sigh*): Quite so. I might say, Ignaty Ilyich, that from my childhood I have avoided the female sex.

SHPIGELSKY (*with a sigh*): Well, there, you see. In a husband that's not a vice. Quite the contrary. But still in some cases—for instance, at the first confession of love, it's indispensable to be able to say at least something. . . . Isn't that so?

BOLSHINTSOV: I quite agree with you.

SHPIGELSKY: And then, possibly Vera Alexandrovna may think that you don't feel well, and nothing more. Besides that, your figure, although it's presentable in every respect, is not of the sort, you know, that elicits instant admiration, and that's required nowadays.

BOLSHINTSOV (*with a sigh*): That's required nowadays.

SHPIGELSKY: At least, the girls like it. Well, and then, your years! . . . In a word, you and I can't hope to succeed by our personal attractions. So you needn't think about any pleasant remarks. That's a poor support. But you have another support which is far more firm and dependable. That's your personal qualities, my most excellent Afanasy Ivanovich, and your three hundred and twenty serfs. In your place, I should simply say to Vera Alexandrovna . . .

BOLSHINTSOV: All alone?

SHPIGELSKY: Oh, all alone, by all means.—"Vera Alexandrovna," (*By the movements of BOLSHINTSOV's lips you can see that in a whisper he repeats every word after SHPIGELSKY.*) "I love you, and I ask for your hand. I am a good, simple man, of gentle disposition, and far from poor. With me, you will be at complete liberty. I will try to

suit you in every way, and pray make inquiries about me. Pray devote a little more attention to me than you have previously, and give me what answer you choose, and when you choose. I am ready to wait, and shall even regard that as a pleasure."

BOLSHINTSOV (*pronouncing aloud the last word*): "Pleasure." Yes, yes, yes. . . . I agree with you. Only here's the point, Ignaty Ilyich. I think that you were pleased to employ the words, "of gentle disposition." So I am a man of gentle disposition?

SHPIGELSKY: Well, aren't you a man of gentle disposition?

BOLSHINTSOV: Ye-es. . . . But all the same, it seems to me . . . Will that be proper, Ignaty Ilyich? Wouldn't it be better to say, for instance . . . ?

SHPIGELSKY: For instance?

BOLSHINTSOV: For instance . . . for instance . . . (*After a pause.*) However, it may do to say "of gentle disposition."

SHPIGELSKY: Oh, Afanasy Ivanovich, listen to me. The more simply you express yourself, the fewer ornamentations you introduce into your speech, the better things will go, believe me; and above all, don't insist, Afanasy Ivanovich, don't insist. Vera Alexandrovna is still very young. You may scare her. . . . Give her time to consider your proposal thoroughly. . . . And one more point! . . . I almost forgot. You see, you have permitted me to give you advice. . . . Sometimes it happens, my dear Afanasy Ivanovich, that you say "duin" and "noo." Of course, why not? You can do it. But you know, the word "doing" and the word "new" are rather more usual. They are in better usage, so to speak. And then, I remember once in my presence you called a certain hospitable landowner a "bonzhiban." You remarked, "What a bonzhiban he is." It's a fine word, but unfortunately, it doesn't mean anything. You know, I myself am not any too strong in the French dialect, but I know that much. Avoid eloquence, and I warrant your success. (*Looking around.*) But here they are! They are all coming this way. (*BOLSHINTSOV is about to withdraw.*) Where are you going? For mushrooms again? (*BOLSHINTSOV smiles, blushes, and holds his ground.*) The main thing is not to be timid!

BOLSHINTSOV (*hastily*): But Vera Alexandrovna doesn't know anything about it yet.

SHPIGELSKY: Of course not.

BOLSHINTSOV: At any rate, I rely on you. (*Blows his nose.*)

(*From the left there come in NATALYA PETROVNA, VERA, BELYAYEV with the kite, KOLYA, and following them, RAKITIN and LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA. NATALYA PETROVNA is in high spirits.*)

NATALYA PETROVNA (*to BOLSHINTSOV and SHPIGELSKY*): Oh, how

do you do, gentlemen! How do you do, Shpigelsky! I didn't expect to see you to-day, but I'm always glad to see you. How do you do, Afanasy Ivanovich! (BOLSHINTSOV bows with a certain confusion.)

SHPIGELSKY (to NATALYA PETROVNA, indicating BOLSHINTSOV): You see, this gentleman insisted on bringing me here.

NATALYA PETROVNA (laughing): I am much obliged to him. . . . But do you need to be forced to come to see us?

SHPIGELSKY: Not at all. But . . . I left here only this morning. . . . Just think. . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA: Oh, you have got mixed up, you have got mixed up, Mr. Diplomat!

SHPIGELSKY: It is very pleasant for me, Natalya Petrovna, to see you in such a gay mood, if I observe correctly.

NATALYA PETROVNA: And you think it necessary to remark on that? . . . But is that such a rare occurrence with me?

SHPIGELSKY: Oh, no indeed. . . . But . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA: *M. le diplomate*, you are getting more and more mixed up.

KOLYA (who has all this time been impatiently hovering about BELYAYEV and VERA): But, mamma, when are we going to fly the kite?

NATALYA PETROVNA: Whenever you please. . . . Alexey Nikolayevich—and you, too, Verochka—let's go to the meadow. (Turning to the rest of the group.) Gentlemen, I don't think that this will be very interesting for you. Lizaveta Bogdanovna, and you, too, Mr. Rakitin, I commend to you our good friend, Afanasy Ivanovich.

RAKITIN: But why do you think, Natalya Petrovna, that we shall not be interested?

NATALYA PETROVNA: You are clever people. . . . This may seem to you a silly frolic. . . . However, as you wish. We won't hinder you from following us. . . . (To BELYAYEV and VEROCHKA.) Come on! (NATALYA PETROVNA, VERA, BELYAYEV and KOLYA go out on the right.)

SHPIGELSKY (looking with a certain amazement at RAKITIN. To BOLSHINTSOV): My good friend, Afanasy Ivanovich, offer your arm to Lizaveta Bogdanovna.

BOLSHINTSOV (hastily): With great pleasure. . . . (Takes LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA'S arm.)

SHPIGELSKY (to RAKITIN): And you and I will go together, if you will allow me, Mikhaylo Alexandrovich. (Takes his arm.) You see how they are running down the path by the trees. Come on, let's see how they fly the kite, even if we are clever people. . . . Afanasy Ivanovich, won't you go in front?

BOLSHINTSOV (*to LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA, as they walk off*): To-day . . . the weather . . . is . . . quite pleasant . . . one may say.

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA (*coquettishly*): Oh, very!

SHPIGELSKY (*to RAKITIN*): But I need to talk over something with you, Mikhaylo Alexandrovich. . . . (RAKITIN *suddenly laughs*.) What are you laughing at?

RAKITIN: Oh . . . nothing! . . . It amuses me that we've fallen into the rear guard.

SHPIGELSKY: The vanguard may very easily, you know, become the rear guard. . . . Everything depends on a change of direction. (*They all go off on the right.*)

ACT III

The same setting as in Act I. From the hall door RAKITIN and SHPIGELSKY come in.

SHPIGELSKY: Well, then, Mikhaylo Alexandrovich, help me out, if you please.

RAKITIN: But how can I help you, Ignaty Ilyich?

SHPIGELSKY: How? Just consider. Just understand my situation, Mikhaylo Alexandrovich. I am really only a third party in this matter, of course. I may say that I acted merely from a desire to be of service. . . . My kind heart will be my ruin yet!

RAKITIN (*laughing*): Well, your ruin is still a long way off.

SHPIGELSKY (*also laughing*): Can't tell about that yet, but my position is certainly embarrassing. I brought Bolshintsov here according to Natalya Petrovna's desire, and I informed him of her answer, with her permission. And now, on one side, they look askance at me, as if I had done something silly, and on the other hand, Bolshintsov won't give me any rest. They avoid him, and won't talk to me.

RAKITIN: Why did you want to take up this matter, Ignaty Ilyich? You see, just between ourselves, Bolshintsov is simply stupid.

SHPIGELSKY: "Between ourselves," you say! What news you are giving me! How long is it since only clever people have been getting married? You can ruin the business of fools in everything else, but you ought not to do so in the marrying line. You say, I took up this affair. . . . Not at all. This is how the matter came about. My friend asked me to put in a word for him. Well, should I have refused him? I am a kind man. I don't know how to refuse. I carried out my friend's commission, and they replied: "We thank you humbly. Don't trouble about the matter any more." I understood, and I didn't trouble

them any more. Then, all of a sudden, they made a proposal to me themselves, and urged me, so to speak. . . . I submitted, and now they are discontented with me. How am I to blame in this?

RAKITIN: Who ever said that you were to blame? . . . I am surprised at just one thing: Why are you taking so much trouble?

SHPIGELSKY: Why? . . . Why? The man won't give me any rest.

RAKITIN: Oh, don't say that! . . .

SHPIGELSKY: And, besides, he is my old, old friend.

RAKITIN (*with a distrustful smile*): Well, that's different.

SHPIGELSKY (*also smiling*): However, I won't dissemble to you. . . . Nobody can deceive *you*. Well, yes . . . he promised me. My side horse has gone lame, and so he promised me—

RAKITIN: Another side horse?

SHPIGELSKY: No, I must confess, a whole team of three.

RAKITIN: You ought to have said that long ago!

SHPIGELSKY (*with animation*): But please don't think . . . I wouldn't have agreed on any consideration to mediate in such a matter—that is completely against my nature—(RAKITIN *smiles*.) if I did not know Bolshintsov as the most honorable of men. . . . However, even now, I am anxious for only one thing: let them give me a decisive answer, yes or no.

RAKITIN: Has the matter reached that point?

SHPIGELSKY: How can you imagine that? . . . I am not talking about marriage, but about permission to make visits here. . . .

RAKITIN: But who can forbid that?

SHPIGELSKY: Forbid it, you say! Of course, for any other person. . . . But Bolshintsov is a timid man, an innocent soul, straight from the Golden Age of Astræa. He is almost like a baby sucking his thumb. . . . He has little self-confidence. He needs to be encouraged a bit. Besides that, his intentions are the most honorable.

RAKITIN: And his horses are good?

SHPIGELSKY: And his horses are good. (*Takes snuff and offers the snuff box to RAKITIN.*) Will you have some?

RAKITIN: No, I thank you.

SHPIGELSKY: That's the way it is, Mikhaylo Alexandrovich. I don't want to deceive you, you see, and what's the use? The whole matter is as clear as a bell. A man of honorable principles, and a man of property, of gentle disposition . . . if he suits, all right. If he doesn't suit, then tell him so.

RAKITIN: All that's fine, I suppose, but how do I come in? I really don't see how *I* can help you.

SHPIGELSKY: Oh, Mikhaylo Alexandrovich, don't I know that Natalya Petrovna esteems you highly, and even sometimes takes your advice.

. . . Really, Mikhaylo Alexandrovich, (*Putting his arm around him.*) be my friend. Put in a word for me.

RAKITIN: And do you think he is a good husband for Verochka?

SHPIGELSKY (*assuming a serious air*): I am convinced of it. You don't believe it. . . . Well, you'll see. In the marrying game, as you know yourself, the principal thing is a solid character, and there is nothing solidier than Bolshintsov. (*Looking around.*) But I think that here comes Natalya Petrovna herself. . . . My friend, my father, my benefactor! Two roans as side horses, and a dark brown for the center! Will you make efforts?

RAKITIN (*smiling*): Well, all right, all right.

SHPIGELSKY: See to it! I rely on you. (*Takes refuge in the hall.*)

RAKITIN (*gazing after him*): What an intriguer that doctor is! Vera . . . and Bolshintsov! . . . And yet why not? There are worse marriages than that. I'll fulfill his commission, and what follows is none of my affair. (*He turns around. NATALYA PETROVNA comes in from the study and stops when she sees him.*)

NATALYA PETROVNA (*indecisively*): Is that . . . you? . . . I thought you were in the garden.

RAKITIN: You seem displeased.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*interrupting him*): Oh, don't say that! (*Coming to the front of the stage.*) Are you alone here?

RAKITIN: Shpigelsky has just left.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*slightly frowning*): Oh, that district Talleyrand! . . . What was he saying to you? Is he still hanging around here?

RAKITIN: That district Talleyrand, as you call him, is evidently not in favor with you to-day. . . . But I think that yesterday . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA: He is ridiculous. He is amusing, to be sure, but . . . but he doesn't mind his own business. . . . That's unpleasant. . . . And besides, with all his servility, he is very insolent and importunate. . . . He is a great cynic.

RAKITIN (*approaching her*): Yesterday you did not speak of him in any such tone.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Possibly. (*With animation.*) So what was he telling you?

RAKITIN: He was telling me . . . about Bolshintsov.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Oh? About that stupid man?

RAKITIN: Yesterday you spoke differently of him, too.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*with a forced smile*): Yesterday isn't to-day.

RAKITIN: For most men. . . . But evidently my case is different.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*lowering her eyes*): How so?

RAKITIN: For me, to-day is the same as yesterday.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*extending her hand to him*): I understand your reproach, but you are mistaken. Yesterday, I should not have confessed that you had any cause to blame me. (RAKITIN *is about to stop her.*) Do not reply to me. I know, and you know, what I mean. . . . And to-day I confess it. To-day I have thought over many things. . . . Believe me, Michel, whatever stupid thoughts may occupy me, whatever I may say, whatever I may do, I rely on no one so much as on you. (*Lowering her voice.*) I do not love . . . any one as I love you. . . . (*After a short pause.*) Do you not believe me?

RAKITIN: I believe you, but to-day you seem sad. . . . What's the matter with you?

NATALYA PETROVNA (*not listening to him, continues*): Only, I have become convinced of one thing, Rakitin. I cannot answer for myself on any occasion, and I can vouch for nothing. Often we do not understand our own past, and how can we answer for the future? You cannot put chains on the future.

RAKITIN: That's true.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*after a long silence*): Listen, I want to be frank with you. Perhaps I shall slightly wound you . . . but I know that my reticence would wound you still more. I confess to you, Michel: that young student—that Belyayev—has produced a rather strong impression upon me.

RAKITIN (*in a low voice*): I knew it.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Oh, you noticed it? Long ago?

RAKITIN: Only yesterday.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Ah!

RAKITIN: The day before yesterday, you remember, I was talking to you about the change that had occurred in you. . . . At that time I did not yet know to what to ascribe it. But yesterday, after our conversation . . . and out there in the meadow . . . if you could have seen yourself! I did not recognize you. You seemed to have become another woman. You laughed, you skipped, you frolicked like a little girl. Your eyes glittered, your cheeks glowed—and with what trustful curiosity, with what joyous attention you gazed at him, how you smiled! (*Glancing at her.*) And even now your face lights up at the mere recollection. (*He turns away.*)

NATALYA PETROVNA: No, Rakitin, for the Lord's sake, do not turn away from me. . . . Listen: why exaggerate? This man has infected me with his youth—that's all. I myself was never young, Michel. Never from my childhood until now. . . . You know my whole life. . . . All this was so unwonted that it went to my head like wine, but I know it will pass away just as quickly as it came. . . . It's hardly

worth speaking of. (*After a pause.*) Only do not turn away from me. Do not withdraw your hand from me. . . . Help me!

RAKITIN (*in a low voice*): Help you! . . . A cruel word! (*Aloud.*) You do not know, yourself, Natalya Petrovna, what is occurring within you. You are convinced that it is not worth talking of, and yet you ask for help. . . . Evidently you feel that you need it!

NATALYA PETROVNA: That is . . . I . . . I appeal to you as a friend.

RAKITIN (*bitterly*): Yes . . . I am ready to justify your confidence. . . . But permit me to collect myself a bit.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Collect yourself? But are you threatened by any . . . unpleasantness? Has anything changed?

RAKITIN (*bitterly*): Oh, no! Everything is as formerly.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Well, what are you thinking of, Michel? It's impossible that you can suppose . . . ?

RAKITIN: I don't suppose anything.

NATALYA PETROVNA: It's impossible that you so despise me that—

RAKITIN: Stop, for the Lord's sake. We had better talk about Bolshintsov. The doctor expects an answer with regard to Verochka, you know.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*gloomily*): You are angry with me.

RAKITIN: I? Oh, no! But I am sorry for you.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Well, that is genuinely irritating. Michel, aren't you ashamed? (*RAKITIN is silent. She shrugs her shoulders and continues with irritation.*) You say the doctor expects an answer? But who asked him to meddle?

RAKITIN: He assured me that you did yourself.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*interrupting him*): Perhaps, perhaps. . . . Although I think I said nothing positive to him. . . . Besides, I may change my intentions. And now—good Heavens!—what difference does it make? Shpigelsky interests himself in affairs of every sort, and in that trade he ought not to succeed every time.

RAKITIN: He only desires to know what answer . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA: What answer? . . . (*After a pause.*) Michel, stop! Give me your hand. Why this indifferent glance, this cold courtesy? . . . How am I to blame? Just think, is all this my fault? I came to you in the hopes of getting some good advice. I did not hesitate a single moment. I did not think of dissembling with you. And you . . . I see that I was wrong to be so open with you. . . . It would never have entered your head. You suspected nothing. You deceived me. And now, the Lord knows what you think.

RAKITIN: I? The idea!

NATALYA PETROVNA: Give me your hand. . . . (*He does not move.*

She continues with a somewhat offended air.) Do you turn away from me for good and all? Look out, it will be so much the worse for you. However, I don't blame you. . . . (*Bitterly.*) You are jealous!

RAKITIN: I have no right to be jealous, Natalya Petrovna. . . . What an idea!

NATALYA PETROVNA (*after a pause*): As you wish. And as for Bolshintsov, I have not yet spoken to Verochka.

RAKITIN: I can send her to you directly.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Why directly? . . . However, as you choose.

RAKITIN (*going towards the door of the study*): Then will you have me send her?

NATALYA PETROVNA: Michel, for the last time! . . . You have just told me that you are sorry for me. . . . So, are you sorry for me? Is it possible that . . . ?

RAKITIN (*coldly*): Shall I send her?

NATALYA PETROVNA (*with vexation*): Yes! (*RAKITIN goes into the study. NATALYA PETROVNA for some time remains motionless. She sits down, takes a book from the table, opens it, and drops it in her lap.*) And that man! What does this mean? He! . . . And he . . . And yet I relied on him. And Arkady? I didn't even remember him! (*Straightening up.*) I see it's time to stop all this. (*VERA comes in from the study.*) Yes, it's time.

VERA (*timidly*): You asked for me, Natalya Petrovna?

NATALYA PETROVNA (*looking around quickly*): Ah, Verochka! Yes, I asked for you.

VERA (*coming up to her*): Are you well?

NATALYA PETROVNA: Yes. Why do you ask?

VERA: It seemed to me . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA: No, I'm all right. I'm a little heated. . . . That's all. Sit down. (*VERA sits down.*) Listen, Vera, you aren't busy with anything at present?

VERA: No.

NATALYA PETROVNA: I ask you because I need to talk with you . . . to talk seriously. Now, you see, my darling, hitherto you have seemed a mere child, but now you are seventeen. You are clever. . . . It's time for you to be thinking of your future. You know I love you as a daughter. My house will always be your house. . . . But, all the same, in the eyes of other people, you are an orphan, you are not rich. In the course of time you may grow tired of living constantly with people not your own. Listen, should you like to be a housewife, mistress of your own house?

VERA (*slowly*): I don't understand you, Natalya Petrovna.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*after a pause*): I am asked for your hand.

(VERA with amazement looks at NATALYA PETROVNA.) You didn't expect that? I confess that I myself find it rather strange. You are still so young. . . . I need not tell you that I have no intention of putting pressure upon you. . . . In my opinion, it is still early for you to marry. I only thought it my duty to inform you. . . . (VERA suddenly covers her face with her hands.) Vera, what does this mean? You are weeping. (Takes her by the hand.) You are trembling all over? . . . Is it possible that you are afraid of me, Vera?

VERA (in a choking voice): I am in your power, Natalya Petrovna.

NATALYA PETROVNA (removing VERA's hands from her face): Vera, aren't you ashamed to weep? Aren't you ashamed to say that you are in my power? Who do you take me for? I am speaking to you as to a daughter, and you . . . (VERA kisses her hands.) So? Are you in my power? Then please laugh right off. . . . I command you to. . . . (VERA smiles through her tears.) That's the way. (NATALYA PETROVNA embraces her with one arm, and draws her to her.) Vera, my child, behave toward me as you would toward your mother, or, no, rather imagine that I am your older sister. And now, let's talk together about all these marvelous things. . . . Will you?

VERA: I am ready.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Well, then, listen. . . . Move up nearer. That's the way. In the first place, since you are my sister, let's suppose that I need not assure you that you are here at home. Such eyes are always at home. Therefore, it ought not to enter your head that you can be a burden to anybody in the world, and that they want to get rid of you. . . . Do you hear? But now, one fine day your sister comes to you and says, "Just imagine, Vera, they are making proposals for you." Well, what will you reply to that? That you are still very young, that you don't even think of marriage?

VERA: Yes, madam.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Don't say, "Yes, madam." Do sisters say, "Yes, madam" to each other?

VERA (smiles): Well, yes.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Your sister agrees with you. They refuse the suitor and the matter is over. But if the suitor is a good man with property, if he is ready to wait, if he merely asks permission to see you occasionally in the hope that in time you will like him . . .

VERA: And who is this suitor?

NATALYA PETROVNA: Oh, you are curious. You don't guess?

VERA: No.

NATALYA PETROVNA: You have seen him to-day. (VERA blushes all over.) To be sure, he isn't very handsome, and not very young. . . . Bolshintsov.

VERA: Afanasy Ivanovich?

NATALYA PETROVNA: Yes, Afanasy Ivanovich.

VERA (*looks for some time at NATALYA PETROVNA. She suddenly begins to laugh and then stops.*) You aren't joking?

NATALYA PETROVNA (*smiling*): No. . . . But I see that Bolshintsov has no further business here. If you had wept at his name, he might still have hopes, but you laugh. There's only one thing left for him, to go home, and the Lord help him!

VERA: Excuse me. . . . But I really never expected . . . At his age, do men still marry?

NATALYA PETROVNA: What do you think? How old is he? He isn't fifty yet. He is in the very prime of life.

VERA: Perhaps . . . but he has such a queer face.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Well, we won't speak of him any more. He is dead and buried. . . . Let him stay so! However, this much is plain. A girl of your age cannot like a man such as Bolshintsov. . . . All of you want to marry for love, and not from interested motives. Is that not true?

VERA: But, Natalya Petrovna . . . did you not yourself marry Arkady Sergeich for love?

NATALYA PETROVNA (*after a pause*): Of course I married him for love. (*After another pause, and clasping VERA's hands.*) But VERA . . . I just called you a little girl . . . but little girls are right. (*VERA lowers her eyes.*) Well, then, the matter is decided. Bolshintsov is dismissed. I must confess I myself should not greatly enjoy seeing his puffy old countenance alongside your fresh little face, although, after all, he is a very good man. So you see now how wrong it was of you to be afraid of me. How quickly everything was settled! . . . (*With a reproach.*) Really, you have behaved with me as if I were your benefactress! You know how I hate that word.

VERA (*embracing her*): Pardon me, Natalya Petrovna.

NATALYA PETROVNA: That's right! You are really not afraid of me?

VERA: No, I love you. I am not afraid of you.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Well, thank you. So now we are great friends, and hide nothing from each other. Well, what if I were to ask you: "Verochka, whisper to me: Do you refuse, then, to marry Bolshintsov merely because he is very much older than you, and not at all good-looking?"

VERA: Well, isn't that enough, Natalya Petrovna?

NATALYA PETROVNA: I don't dispute it, but isn't there any other reason?

VERA: I don't know him at all.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Quite true, but you do not answer my question.

VERA: There is no other reason.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Really? In that case, I should advise you to reflect a bit more. I know that it is hard to fall in love with Bolshintsov . . . but I repeat to you, he is a good man. Now, if you had fallen in love with some other man . . . well, then matters would be different. But your heart is still silent, is it not?

VERA (*timidly*): What?

NATALYA PETROVNA: You do not yet love any one?

VERA: I love you . . . and Kolya. I also love Anna Semenovna.

NATALYA PETROVNA: No, I am not talking about that kind of love; you don't understand me. . . . For instance, of the various young men whom you may have met in our house, or when visiting, is it possible that you do not care for a single one?

VERA: No, I like several of them, but . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA: For instance, I noticed that at the evening party at the Krinitsyns', you danced three times with that tall officer. . . . What's his name?

VERA: With an officer?

NATALYA PETROVNA: Yes, he has a large mustache.

VERA: Oh, that man? No, I don't care for him.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Well, how about Shalansky?

VERA: Shalansky is a good man, but he . . . I think he has no use for me.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Why so?

VERA: He . . . He seems to think more of Liza Velsky.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*glancing at her*): . . . Ah, you noticed that? (*After a pause.*) Well, Rakitin?

VERA: I am very fond of Mikhaylo Alexandrovich. . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA: Yes, as a brother. Well, how about Belyayev?

VERA (*blushing*): Alexey Nikolayevich? I like Alexey Nikolayevich.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*observing VERA*): Yes, he is a good man, only he is so shy with every one.

VERA (*artlessly*): No . . . he is not shy with me.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Ah!

VERA: He talks with me. Perhaps the reason why you think that, is that he . . . he is afraid of you. He has not yet learned to know you.

NATALYA PETROVNA: But how do you know that he is afraid of me?

VERA: He told me so.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Ah, he told you so? . . . So he is franker with you than with other people?

VERA: I don't know how he behaves towards others, but with me . . . perhaps because we are both orphans. . . . And besides, in his eyes, I am a child.

NATALYA PETROVNA: You think so? I also like him very much. Probably he has a very kind heart.

VERA: Oh, awfully kind! If you only knew! . . . Everybody in the house likes him. He is so friendly. He talks to everybody. He is ready to help everybody. Day before yesterday he carried a poor old woman in his arms from the road to the hospital. . . . Once he picked a flower for me from such a steep ravine that I just shut my eyes for fear he might fall and hurt himself, but he's so very active! You yourself, yesterday, in the meadow, could see how active he was.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Yes, that is true.

VERA: Do you remember when he was running after the kite, what a broad ditch he jumped across? But that was nothing for him.

NATALYA PETROVNA: And, really, did he pick a flower for you from a dangerous place? Evidently he loves you.

VERA (*after a pause*): And he is always gay, always in good spirits.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Well, that seems strange! Why in my presence is he—?

VERA (*interrupting her*): But I tell you that he doesn't know you. Just wait, I'll tell him. I'll tell him that he needn't be afraid of you—isn't that true?—that you are so kind. . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA (*with a forced laugh*): Thanks.

VERA: Wait, you'll see. . . . And he takes my advice, in spite of my being younger than he.

NATALYA PETROVNA: I didn't know that you and he were such friends. . . . But look out, Vera; be cautious. Of course he is a splendid young man . . . but you know at your age . . . this isn't proper. People may gossip. I reminded you of this yesterday—do you remember?—in the garden. (VERA *lowers her eyes*.) On the other hand, I do not wish to hinder your inclinations. I have too much confidence in you and in him. . . . But all the same, do not be angry with me, my darling, for my straitlaced ways. This is what old people like me are for—to bore young people with advice. With advice and instruction. However, I am wrong in saying all this. It is true, is it not, you like him—and nothing more?

VERA (*timidly raising her eyes*): He . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA: Now you are looking at me again as you did before. Is that the way to look at a sister? Listen, Verochka, bend down to me. . . . (*Caressing her*.) Well, if your sister, your real sister, were to ask you in a whisper, "Verochka, do you really love no one, are you sure?" What should you answer her? (VERA *looks in perplexity at NATALYA PETROVNA*.) These eyes wish to tell me something. . . . (VERA *suddenly presses her face against the bosom of*

NATALYA PETROVNA. NATALYA PETROVNA *turns pale, and after a pause continues.*) Do you love him? Tell me, do you love him?

VERA (*not raising her head*): Oh, I don't know myself what is the matter with me.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Poor little girl! You are in love. (VERA *presses still closer to the bosom of NATALYA PETROVNA.*) You are in love. . . . And he, what about him, Vera?

VERA (*still not raising her head*): Why do you ask me? . . . I don't know. . . . Maybe. . . . I don't know. . . . I don't know. . . . (NATALYA PETROVNA *trembles and remains motionless. VERA raises her head and suddenly notices a change on NATALYA PETROVNA's face.*) Natalya Petrovna, what is the matter with you?

NATALYA PETROVNA (*coming to herself*): Nothing is the matter with me. Why do you ask? Nothing at all.

VERA: You are so pale, Natalya Petrovna. . . . What is the matter with you? Permit me, I'll ring. (*She rises.*)

NATALYA PETROVNA: No, no, don't ring. . . . It's nothing. . . . It will pass. There, it's past, already.

VERA: Permit me at least to call somebody.

NATALYA PETROVNA: No indeed. I . . . I . . . want to be left alone. Leave me. Do you hear? We'll have a talk later. Go away.

VERA: You are not angry with me, Natalya Petrovna?

NATALYA PETROVNA: I? What for? Not at all. On the contrary, I am grateful to you for your confidence. . . . Only leave me, please, now. (VERA *tries to take her hand, but NATALYA PETROVNA turns away, as if she did not notice VERA's movement.*)

VERA (*with tears in her eyes*): Natalya Petrovna!

NATALYA PETROVNA: Leave me, I beg of you. (VERA *slowly goes off to the study. NATALYA PETROVNA remains alone for some time, motionless.*) Now everything is clear to me. . . . These children love each other. (*She stops and passes her hand over her face.*) Well, so much the better. God grant them happiness! (*Laughing.*) And I . . . I might have thought . . . (*She stops again.*) She blurted it out very quickly. . . . I confess I never suspected. . . . I confess this news overwhelmed me. . . . But just wait. It isn't all over yet. Good Heavens, what am I saying? What is the matter with me? I don't recognize myself. What have I come to? (*After a pause.*) What am I doing? I am trying to marry a poor little girl . . . to an old man! . . . I send the doctor as a messenger. . . . He guesses what is up and hints at it. . . . Arkady . . . Rakitin . . . and I . . . (*She trembles and suddenly raises her head.*) But what does this mean, really? Am I jealous of Vera? Am I . . . am I in love with him? (*After a pause.*) And do you still doubt it? You are in love, unhappy

woman! How this happened, I do not know. It is as if I had been given poison. . . . Suddenly all is crushed, shattered, swept away. . . . He is afraid of me. . . . Everybody is afraid of me. What does he care for me? . . . What use has he for such a creature as I? He is young, and she is young. And I? (*Bitterly.*) How can he appreciate me? They are both stupid, as Rakitin says. Oh, how I hate that clever man! And Arkady, my kind, trustful Arkady! My God! My God! This will kill me! (*Rises.*) Really, it seems to me that I am going mad. Why exaggerate? Well, yes, I am overwhelmed. . . . This is a new thing to me. This is the first time that I . . . Yes, the first time! I am in love now for the first time! (*She sits down again.*) He must go away. Yes, and Rakitin, too. It's time for me to come to my senses. I have permitted myself to take one step, and see what has happened. Here's what I have come to. And what is it that I like in him? (*Meditates.*) So here it is, that frightful emotion. . . . Arkady! Yes, I will run to his embrace. I will implore him to forgive me, to defend me, to save me—he . . . and no one else. All other men are strangers to me, and must remain strangers. . . . But, is it possible . . . is it possible there is no other means? That little girl, she is only a child. She may have been mistaken. This is all childishness, after all. . . . Why did I . . . ? I will have an explanation with him myself. I will ask him . . . (*With a reproach.*) Ah, ha? Do you still have hope? Do you still desire to have hope? And what do I hope for! Good God, do not let me despise myself! (*She leans her head on her hands.* RAKITIN comes in from the study, pale and agitated.)

RAKITIN (*going up to NATALYA PETROVNA*): Natalya Petrovna! . . . (*She does not move. To himself.*) What can have happened between her and Vera? (*Aloud.*) Natalya Petrovna!

NATALYA PETROVNA (*raising her head*): You, is it? Ah, you.

RAKITIN: Vera Alexandrovna told me that you were not well. I . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA (*turning aside*): I am well. . . . How did she get that idea?

RAKITIN: No, Natalya Petrovna, you are not well. Just look at yourself.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Well, maybe. . . . But what's that to you? What do you want? Why did you come here?

RAKITIN (*in a voice full of feeling*): I'll tell you why I came here. I came here to beg your forgiveness. A half-hour ago I was unspeakably stupid and harsh to you. . . . Forgive me! You see, Natalya Petrovna, however modest may be the desires and . . . and the hopes of a man, it is hard for him not to lose control of himself for a

moment, when they suddenly spring up within him; but I now have come to myself. I understand my position, and my fault, and I wish for only one thing, your forgiveness. (*He sits down quietly beside her.*) Look at me. . . . Pray do not turn away from me. Before you is your former Rakitin, your friend, a man who demands nothing but the permission to serve as a support, to use your own words. . . . Do not deprive me of your confidence—let me serve you—and forget that once on a time I . . . Forget everything that may have offended you.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*who has been looking fixedly at the floor all this time*): Yes, yes. (*Stopping.*) Oh, pardon me, Rakitin! I did not hear anything of what you were saying to me.

RAKITIN (*sadly*): I was saying . . . I was begging your forgiveness, Natalya Petrovna. I was asking you whether you would permit me to remain your friend.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*slowly turning toward him, and putting both her hands on his shoulders*): Tell me, Rakitin, what is the matter with me?

RAKITIN (*after a pause*): You are in love.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*slowly repeating after him*): I am in love. . . . But this is madness, Rakitin. This is impossible. Can it happen so suddenly? You say I am in love. (*She becomes silent.*)

RAKITIN: Yes, you are in love, poor woman. . . . Do not deceive yourself.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*without looking at him*): What is there left for me to do now?

RAKITIN: I am ready to tell you, Natalya Petrovna, if you will promise me—

NATALYA PETROVNA (*interrupting him, and still not looking at him*): You know that that little girl, Vera, loves him. . . . They are in love with each other.

RAKITIN: In that case, there is one further reason—

NATALYA PETROVNA (*again interrupting him*): I long ago suspected this, but just now she confessed the whole story to me . . . just now.

RAKITIN (*in a low voice, as if to himself*): Poor woman!

NATALYA PETROVNA (*passing her hand over her face*): Well, at all events . . . it is time for me to come to my senses. I think you wish to say something to me. . . . Advise me, for God's sake, Rakitin, what I should do.

RAKITIN: I am ready to advise you, Natalya Petrovna, but under one condition.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Tell me what it is.

RAKITIN: Promise me that you will not suspect my intentions. Tell

me that you believe in my disinterested desire to aid you. And you must aid me also. Your confidence will give me strength. Otherwise, you had better permit me to be silent.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Speak. Speak.

RAKITIN: You do not doubt me!

NATALYA PETROVNA: Speak.

RAKITIN: Well, then, listen. He must go away. (NATALYA PETROVNA looks at him in silence.) Yes, he must go away. I will not speak to you of your husband . . . of your duty. From me these words . . . would be out of place. . . . But these children love each other. You yourself told me that just now. Then imagine yourself now as standing between them. . . . You will perish!

NATALYA PETROVNA: He must go away. . . . (After a pause.) And you? You will remain?

RAKITIN (confused): I? . . . I? . . . (After a pause.) I too must go away. For your peace, for your happiness, for the happiness of Verochka, both he . . . and I . . . we both must go away forever.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Rakitin . . . I have sunk so low that I . . . I was almost ready to marry that poor little girl, an orphan, entrusted to me by my mother . . . to marry her to a stupid, ridiculous old man! . . . I did not have the courage, Rakitin; the words died on my lips when she laughed, in reply to my proposal. . . . But I made a conspiracy with that doctor. I permitted him to smile in a knowing way. I endured those smiles, those courtesies of his, his hints. . . . Oh, I feel that I am on the edge of an abyss! Save me!

RAKITIN: Natalya Petrovna, you see that I was right. . . . (She is silent. He hastily continues.) He must go away. . . . We must both go away. . . . There is no other salvation.

NATALYA PETROVNA (wearily): But what shall I live for after that?

RAKITIN: Good heavens! Has it come to this? . . . Natalya Petrovna, you will recover, believe me. . . . This will all pass off. How can you ask what you will live for?

NATALYA PETROVNA: Yes, yes, what shall I live for when every one is deserting me?

RAKITIN: But . . . your family . . . (NATALYA PETROVNA lowers her eyes.) Listen. If you wish, after his departure I can remain for a few days more . . . in order to . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA (gloomily): Ah! I understand you. You count on habit, on our former friendship. . . . You hope that I shall come to my senses, that I shall return to you, do you not? I understand you.

RAKITIN (blushing): Natalya Petrovna! Why do you insult me?

NATALYA PETROVNA (bitterly): I understand you. . . . But you deceive yourself.

RAKITIN: What? After your promises? After what I have done for you, for you alone, for your happiness, and finally, for your position in the world?

NATALYA PETROVNA: Ah, is it long since you have taken such care of it? Why have you never spoken to me of that subject before?

RAKITIN (*rising*): Natalya Petrovna, I shall leave here to-day—at once. And you will never see me again. (*Is about to go.*)

NATALYA PETROVNA (*stretching out her hands to him*): Michel, forgive me. I do not know myself what I am saying. . . . You see what a position I am in. Forgive me!

RAKITIN (*quickly returning to her and taking her hands*): Natalya Petrovna! . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA: Ah, Michel, I cannot tell you what torment I suffer! (*Leans on his shoulder and presses her handkerchief to her eyes.*) Help me! Without you I shall perish!

(*At this moment the door of the hall opens, and ISLAYEV and ANNA SEMENOVNA come in.*)

ISLAYEV (*in a loud voice*): I have also been of the opinion . . . (*He stops in amazement at the sight of RAKITIN and NATALYA PETROVNA. NATALYA PETROVNA looks around and quickly walks out into the study. RAKITIN does not stir, but is extremely abashed.*)

ISLAYEV (*to RAKITIN*): What does this mean? What sort of scene is this?

RAKITIN: Oh! . . . Nothing. . . . This . . .

ISLAYEV: Is Natalya Petrovna ill?

RAKITIN: No. . . . But . . .

ISLAYEV: But why should she run out so suddenly? What were you talking about together? She seemed to be weeping. . . . You were comforting her. . . . What does this mean?

RAKITIN: Nothing at all.

ANNA SEMENOVNA: Let me ask you why this is nothing at all, Mikhaylo Alexandrovich? (*After a pause.*) I'll go and see. (*Is about to go into the study.*)

RAKITIN (*stopping her*): No, you had better leave her in peace, now; I beg of you.

ISLAYEV: But what does all this mean? Tell me, pray!

RAKITIN: Nothing, I swear to you. Listen, I promise you both that I will explain everything this very day. I give you my word. But just now, please, if you have confidence in me, do not ask me anything, and do not trouble Natalya Petrovna.

ISLAYEV: All right. . . . Only this is surprising. This is not like Natasha. This is something unusual.

ANNA SEMENOVNA: Above all, what could make Natasha weep, and why did she go out? . . . Are we strangers?

RAKITIN: What are you saying? How can you!— But listen: I must confess, we had not finished our conversation. . . . I must ask you . . . both of you . . . to leave us alone for a little while.

ISLAYEV: Well, well! So you had a secret?

RAKITIN: A secret. . . . But you will learn it.

ISLAYEV (*after meditation*): Come on, mamma! . . . Let's leave them. Let them finish their mysterious conversation.

ANNA SEMENOVNA: But . . .

ISLAYEV: Come on, come on! You have heard him promise to explain everything.

RAKITIN: You may rest at peace.

ISLAYEV (*coldly*): Oh, I am perfectly at peace! (*To ANNA SEMENOVNA.*) Come on. (*They both go out.*)

RAKITIN (*gazing after them and going quickly to the door of the study*): Natalya Petrovna! . . . Natalya Petrovna! . . . Come out, I beg of you!

NATALYA PETROVNA (*coming out of the study. She is very pale*): What did they say?

RAKITIN: Nothing. Calm yourself. . . . They were really a trifle surprised. Your husband thought that you were not well. He noticed your agitation. . . . (*NATALYA PETROVNA sits down.*) I told him . . . I asked him not to disturb you . . . to leave us alone.

NATALYA PETROVNA: And he agreed?

RAKITIN: Yes. I must confess that I had to promise him that I would explain everything to-morrow. . . . Why did you go out?

NATALYA PETROVNA (*bitterly*): Why! . . . But what will you tell him?

RAKITIN: I . . . I will think up something. . . . That's not the question now. . . . We must take advantage of this postponement. You see, this cannot continue in the same way. . . . You are not in a condition to bear such agitations. . . . They are unworthy of you. . . . I, myself . . . But that is not what we were speaking of. Only be firm, and I will attend to the matter. Listen. You agree with me?

NATALYA PETROVNA: In what?

RAKITIN: As to the necessity . . . of our departure? Do you agree? In that case there is no use delaying. If you will permit me, I will talk things over immediately myself with Belyayev. . . . He is a gentleman. He will understand.

NATALYA PETROVNA: You wish to talk things over with him? You? . . . But what can you say to him?

RAKITIN (*confused*): I . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA (*after a pause*): Listen, Rakitin. Don't you think that we both seem out of our senses? . . . I was frightened. I frightened you. And perhaps the whole thing is just nonsense.

RAKITIN: What?

NATALYA PETROVNA: Honestly, what are you and I doing? A while ago, as I think of it, everything was so calm, so peaceful in this house . . . and all of a sudden, what has happened? On my word, we've all gone mad. Really, we've played the fool long enough! . . . Now we'll begin to live as we used to. . . . And you will have no need to explain things to Arkady. I myself will tell him of our misdeeds, and he and I will laugh at them together. I do not need a mediator between my husband and myself.

RAKITIN: Natalya Petrovna, now you *are* frightening me. You are smiling, but you are pale as death. . . . Do at least remember what you were telling me a quarter of an hour ago.

NATALYA PETROVNA: There's a lot to remember! However, I see how the matter stands. . . . You yourself raised this storm . . . in order at least not to drown alone.

RAKITIN: Again! Again suspicion, again reproach, Natalya Petrovna! . . . The Lord help you! . . . But you are tormenting me. Or do you repent your frankness?

NATALYA PETROVNA: I repent nothing.

RAKITIN: Then how shall I understand you?

NATALYA PETROVNA (*with animation*): Rakitin, if you say even a word to Belyayev about me, or as coming from me, I shall never forgive you.

RAKITIN: Oh, so that's it! . . . Be at peace, Natalya Petrovna, I not only shall say nothing to Mr. Belyayev, but I shall not even say good-by to him when I leave here. I have no intention of forcing my services on people.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*with some confusion*): But perhaps you think that I have changed my opinion with regard to . . . his departure?

RAKITIN: I don't think anything at all.

NATALYA PETROVNA: On the contrary, I am so convinced of the necessity of his departure, as you term it, that I, myself, have decided to dismiss him. (*After a pause.*) Yes, I will dismiss him myself.

RAKITIN: You?

NATALYA PETROVNA: Yes, I, and immediately. I beg you to send him to me.

RAKITIN: What? Right away?

NATALYA PETROVNA: Right away. I beg you to do so, Rakitin. You see, I am now calm. Besides, I am now at liberty. I must take

advantage of this. . . . I shall be very grateful to you. I will cross-examine him.

RAKITIN: But may I remark that he won't tell you anything! He himself confessed to me that he felt embarrassed in your presence.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*suspiciously*): Ah, you have already spoken with him about me? (RAKITIN *shrugs his shoulders*.) Well, excuse me, excuse me, Michel, but send him to me. You will see that I shall dismiss him, and everything will be over. Everything will pass by and be forgotten like a bad dream. Please send him to me. It is absolutely necessary for me to have a final talk with him. You will be content with me. Please!

RAKITIN (*who all the time has kept his eyes fixed upon her: coldly and sadly*): Very well, your desires shall be fulfilled. (*He goes to the door of the hall.*)

NATALYA PETROVNA (*calls after him*): Thank you, Michel.

RAKITIN (*turning around*): Oh, don't thank me, at any rate! (*He quickly goes out into the hall.*)

NATALYA PETROVNA (*alone, after a pause*): He is a gentleman. . . . But is it possible that I ever loved him? (*Rising.*) He is right: the teacher must leave. But how shall I dismiss him? I only wish to know whether he really likes that little girl. Perhaps that is all nonsense. How could I have become so agitated? . . . What is the use of all these bursts of emotion? Well, now there is no help for it! I want to know what he will say to me. But he must leave . . . without fail . . . without fail. . . . Perhaps he will refuse to answer me, seeing that he is afraid of me. . . . Well, so much the better. I have no need to converse much with him. . . . (*Puts her hand to her forehead.*) But my head aches. Shan't I postpone it until to-morrow? That would be better. To-day I keep thinking that I am being observed. . . . What have I come to! No, it is better to finish it up all at once. . . . One more final effort and I am free! . . . Oh, yes! . . . I thirst for freedom and peace. (BELYAYEV *comes in from the hall.*) It is he. . . .

BELYAYEV (*going up to her*): Natalya Petrovna, Mikhaylo Alexandrovich told me that you desired to see me.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*with a certain effort*): Quite so. . . . I need to have . . . an explanation with you.

BELYAYEV: An explanation?

NATALYA PETROVNA (*without looking at him*): Yes, an explanation. (*After a pause.*) Permit me to tell you, Alexey Nikolayevich, that I . . . that I am dissatisfied with you.

BELYAYEV: May I inquire the reason?

NATALYA PETROVNA: Listen to me. . . . I . . . I really don't know

how to begin. . . . At all events I must forewarn you that my displeasure does not proceed from any neglect of duty . . . on your part. . . . On the contrary, I have liked your conduct with Kolya.

BELYAYEV: But what can be the reason?

NATALYA PETROVNA (*glancing at him*): You have no cause for alarm. Your fault is not of any great importance. You are young, and probably have never lived in another person's house. You could not foresee . . .

BELYAYEV: But, Natalya Petrovna . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA: You wish to know what the trouble is? I understand your impatience. Well, I must inform you that Verochka . . . (*With a glance at him.*) Verochka has confessed everything to me.

BELYAYEV (*amazed*): Vera Alexandrovna? What could Vera Alexandrovna confess to you? And how do I come in?

NATALYA PETROVNA: Don't you really know what she could confess? Don't you guess?

BELYAYEV: I? Not a bit.

NATALYA PETROVNA: In that case, pardon me. If you really don't guess—I must ask your forgiveness. I really thought . . . I was mistaken. But permit me to remark to you . . . I don't believe you. I understand what makes you speak in that way. . . . I greatly respect your modesty.

BELYAYEV: I absolutely do not understand you, Natalya Petrovna.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Really? Is it possible that you think that you can make me believe that you have not noticed the affection of that child Verochka for you?

BELYAYEV: The affection of Vera Alexandrovna for me? I don't even know what to reply to you. . . . Good gracious, I think I have always behaved with Vera Alexandrovna as—

NATALYA PETROVNA: As with every one else, I suppose? (*After a slight pause.*) However it may be, whether you really do not know it, or whether you are pretending you do not know, here's the point: that little girl is in love with you. She herself has confessed it to me. Well, now I ask you as an honorable man what you intend to do.

BELYAYEV (*amazed*): What I intend to do?

NATALYA PETROVNA (*folding her arms*): Yes.

BELYAYEV: All this is so unexpected, Natalya Petrovna.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*after a pause*): Alexey Nikolayevich, I see . . . I haven't taken hold of this affair correctly. You don't understand me. You think I am angry with you, and I . . . and I . . . am just a little excited. . . . And this is very natural. Calm yourself. Let us sit down. (*They both sit down.*) I will be frank with you, Alexey Nikolayevich. And on your side, pray show a little less reserve toward

me. Honestly, you are wrong in holding aloof from me. Vera loves you. . . . Of course you are not to blame for that. I am ready to suppose that you are not to blame for that. . . . But you see, Alexey Nikolayevich, she is an orphan, my protégée. . . . I am responsible for her, for her future, for her happiness. She is still young, and I am convinced that the feeling you have inspired in her may soon vanish. . . . At her years, love doesn't last for long. But you understand that it was my duty to forewarn you. And, moreover, it is always dangerous to play with fire . . . and I don't doubt that you, since you now know her affection for you, will alter your behavior toward her, will avoid meetings and walks in the garden. . . . Is not that the case? I may rely upon you, I am sure. . . . With another man I should have been afraid of so direct an explanation.

BELYAYEV: Natalya Petrovna, believe me, I am able to appreciate—

NATALYA PETROVNA: I tell you that I have confidence in you. . . . Besides, this will all remain a secret between us two.

BELYAYEV: I confess to you, Natalya Petrovna, all that you have told me seems to me so strange. . . . Of course I do not dare to disbelieve you, but—

NATALYA PETROVNA: Listen, Alexey Nikolayevich, all that I have just now told you I . . . I have said on the supposition that on your side there is nothing . . . (*Interrupting herself.*) Because in any other case . . . Of course, I am still little acquainted with you, but I already know you well enough to see no reason for opposing your intentions. You are not rich . . . but you are young. You have a future, and when two people love each other . . . I repeat to you, I regarded it as my duty to forewarn you, as an honorable man, with regard to the consequences of your acquaintance with Vera. But if you . . .

BELYAYEV (*with perplexity*): I really don't know what you mean, Natalya Petrovna.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*hastily*): Oh, believe me, I do not require a confession from you. Even without it . . . I shall understand from your conduct how the matter stands. (*With a glance at him.*) However, I must tell you that Vera thought that on your side you were not entirely indifferent to her.

BELYAYEV (*after a pause. Rising*): Natalya Petrovna, I see that I cannot remain in your house.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*flashing up*): I think that you might have waited for me to discharge you myself. (*She rises.*)

BELYAYEV: You have been frank with me. . . . Permit me also to be frank with you. I do not love Vera Alexandrovna. At least, I do not love her in the way you suppose.

NATALYA PETROVNA: But have I . . . ? (*She stops.*)

BELYAYEV: And if Vera Alexandrovna has come to like me; if it appears to her that I, too, as you say, am not indifferent to her, I do not wish to deceive her. I will tell the whole story to her herself, the whole truth. But after such an explanation, you will understand yourself, Natalya Petrovna, it will be hard for me to remain here. My position would be too embarrassing. I will not tell you how hard it is for me to leave your house, but there is nothing else for me to do. I shall always remember you with gratitude. . . . Permit me to withdraw. . . . I shall have the honor of bidding you farewell later.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*with feigned indifference*): As you wish . . . but I confess I did not expect this. . . . This was not at all the reason why I wished to have an explanation with you. . . . I only wished to forewarn you. . . . Vera is still a child. . . . Perhaps I have attached too much importance to all this. I see no necessity for your departure. However, as you wish.

BELYAYEV: Really, Natalya Petrovna . . . it is impossible for me to remain here longer.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Evidently it is very easy for you to bid us farewell!

BELYAYEV: No, Natalya Petrovna, it is not easy.

NATALYA PETROVNA: I am not accustomed to retain persons against their will . . . but I confess this is very unpleasant to me.

BELYAYEV (*with a certain indecision*): Natalya Petrovna . . . I should not like to cause you the least unpleasantness. . . . I will remain.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*suspiciously*): Ah! . . . (*After a pause.*) I did not expect that you would change your decision so quickly. . . . I am grateful to you, but . . . permit me to think. Perhaps you are right. Perhaps it is really necessary for you to leave. I will think it over and inform you. . . . You will permit me to leave you in uncertainty until this evening?

BELYAYEV: I am ready to wait as long as you please. (*He bows and is about to leave.*)

NATALYA PETROVNA: You promise me . . .

BELYAYEV (*stopping*): What?

NATALYA PETROVNA: I think that you wish to have an explanation with Vera. I do not know whether that will be proper. However, I will inform you of my decision. I begin to think that it is really necessary for you to leave. Good-by for the present.

(BELYAYEV bows for a second time and goes out into the hall.)

NATALYA PETROVNA (*gazes after him*): I am calm. He does not love her. . . . (*Pacing up and down the room.*) So instead of dis-

missing him, I was the one to retain him? He remains here. . . . But what shall I tell Rakitin? What have I done? (*After a pause.*) And what right did I have to publish abroad the love of that poor little girl? . . . How could I? I myself enticed a confession from her . . . a half-confession, and then I behaved so pitilessly, so harshly! (*Covers her face with her hands.*) Perhaps he was beginning to love her. What right did I have to trample that budding flower? . . . But after all, did I trample it? Perhaps he deceived me. . . . And I wished to deceive him! . . . Oh, no! He has too much fineness for that. . . . He is not like me! And why was I in such a hurry? Why did I blurt it all out at once? (*Sighing.*) What didn't I do? If I could have foreseen! . . . How cunning I was! What lies I told him! . . . And he! How boldly and freely he spoke! . . . I bowed before him. . . . That is a man! I never knew him before. . . . He must leave. . . . If he remains . . . I feel I shall come to such a pass that I shall lose all self-respect. . . . He must leave or I am lost! I will write him before he has a chance to see Vera. He must leave! (*She goes out quickly into the study.*)

ACT IV

A large, empty hall. The walls are bare. The floor is of uneven stones. Six brick columns, whitewashed, and in poor repair, support the ceiling, three on each side. On the left are two open windows and a door into the garden. On the right is a door to a corridor which leads to the main house. In the center is an iron door, which leads to the storehouse. Near the first column at the right is a green garden bench. In one corner are several spades, watering pots, and flower pots. It is evening. The red beams of the sun fall on the floor through the windows.

KATYA (*entering from a door on the right, goes quickly to the window, and for some time looks into the garden*): No, he is not to be seen. And they told me that he had gone to the hothouse. So, he cannot have come out from there yet. I'll wait till he passes by. He must come by that path. (*She sighs and leans against the window.*) They say that he is going away. (*Sighs again.*) How can we live without him? . . . Poor young lady! How she begged me! . . . Well, why shouldn't I be of service to her? Let her have a talk with him for the last time! How warm it is to-day! And I think the rain is beginning to patter. (*Again looks out of the window and suddenly moves back.*) But aren't they coming here? . . . They certainly are. Oh,

Heavens! (*She starts to run away, but before she can reach the door of the corridor, there enter from the garden SHPIGELSKY and LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA. KATYA hides behind the column.*)

SHPIGELSKY (*brushing off his hat*): We may wait here till the shower is over. It will pass soon.

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA: I suppose so.

SHPIGELSKY (*looking around*): What kind of structure is this? Is it a storehouse?

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA (*pointing to the iron door*): No, the storehouse is there. They call this a hall. The father of Arkady Sergeich built it when he returned from abroad.

SHPIGELSKY: Oh, I see what this means. This is Venice, pray observe! (*Sitting down on the bench.*) Let's sit here. (*LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA sits down.*) And you must agree, Lizaveta Bogdanovna, that that shower came at the wrong moment. It interrupted our interview at the most delicate point.

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA (*lowering her eyes*): Ignaty Ilyich . . .

SHPIGELSKY: But no one can hinder us from renewing our conversation. . . . By the way, you say that Anna Semenovna is out of sorts to-day?

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA: Yes, she is. She even had dinner in her own room.

SHPIGELSKY: Well, well! What a misfortune! I declare!

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA: This morning she found Natalya Petrovna in tears . . . with Mikhaylo Alexandrovich. . . . He, of course, is a friend of the family, but all the same . . . However, Mikhaylo Alexandrovich promised to explain everything.

SHPIGELSKY: Ah! Well, she is quite wrong in being agitated. Mikhaylo Alexandrovich, in my opinion, was never a dangerous man, and now he is less so than ever.

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA: Why so?

SHPIGELSKY: Well, you see, he talks too cleverly. Some people are subject to a rash, but these clever men are subject to too much wagging of the tongue. In the future, Lizaveta Bogdanovna, don't be afraid of people who talk a lot. They aren't dangerous. But those who are generally silent, and have a dash of madness, and a lot of temperament, and broad craniums—those people are dangerous.

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA (*after a pause*): Tell me, is Natalya Petrovna really ill?

SHPIGELSKY: Just as ill as you and I.

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA: She didn't eat anything at dinner.

SHPIGELSKY: Other things than illness take away the appetite.

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA: Did you dine with Bolshintsov?

SHPIGELSKY: Yes, I did. . . . I went to call on him. And I came back solely on your account, I swear.

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA: Oh, stop! Let me tell you, Ignaty Ilyich, Natalya Petrovna is angry at you for some reason. . . . At table she expressed herself about you in no flattering terms.

SHPIGELSKY: Really? Evidently fine ladies don't like it when men like me have keen eyes. You must act according to their wishes and help them—and pretend into the bargain that you don't understand them. That's their kind! But we'll see later. And Rakitin, I suppose, is hanging his head, too?

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA: Yes. To-day he seems to be a little bit off his balance.

SHPIGELSKY: Hm! And Vera Alexandrovna? And Belyayev?

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA: Every one. Absolutely every one is out of sorts. I really can't think what's the matter with all of them to-day.

SHPIGELSKY: If you know too much, you will grow old too soon, Lizaveta Bogdanovna. Well, anyway, deuce take 'em! Let's talk about our own affair. The shower, you see, hasn't stopped yet. . . . Will you?

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA (*lowering her eyes affectedly*): What are you asking me, Ignaty Ilyich?

SHPIGELSKY: Oh, Lizaveta Bogdanovna, let me inquire of you: Why do you want to be so affected and lower your eyes all of a sudden in this fashion? You and I are not young people any longer! These ceremonies, these tendernesses, these sighs—all such things are unbecoming to us. Let's speak calmly and to the point, as befits people of our years. And so here's the question: We like each other . . . at least I presume that you like me. . . .

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA (*with slight affectation*): Ignaty Ilyich, really. . . .

SHPIGELSKY: Well, yes, yes, all right. For you, as a woman, it's proper, I suppose . . . in a way . . . (*With a gesture.*) to beat about the bush like this, so to speak. Well, then, we like each other, and in other regards we are also well suited. Of course I must admit that I myself am not of high birth. But then, you also are not of gentle origin. I am not a rich man, otherwise I should . . . (*Grins.*) But I have a fair practice, my patients don't all die, and you, according to your own account, have fifteen thousand in cash. That's all not so bad, you see. Besides, I imagine that you are tired of an eternal existence as a governess. And the perpetual fussing with an old woman, and playing preference with her, and humoring her—that also cannot be gay. On my side, I am not exactly bored with a bachelor life, but I am getting old. My cooks are plundering me. And so, all these

circumstances harmonize with each other. But here's where the difficulty comes in, Lizaveta Bogdanovna. We don't know each other at all: that is, to be more exact, you don't know me. . . . I do know you. Your character is well known to me. I don't say that you have no defects. Since you are an old maid, you have soured a bit, but there's no harm in that. For a good man, a wife is like soft wax, but I desire that you, too, should be acquainted with me before our marriage, otherwise maybe you'll begin to complain of me later. I don't want to deceive you.

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA (*with dignity*): But it seems to me, Ignaty Ilyich, that I also have had a chance to observe your character.

SHPIGELSKY: You? Oh, stop it! . . . That's not a woman's business. For instance, I warrant, you think that I'm a man of gay disposition, a jolly fellow, don't you?

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA: You have always seemed to me a very genial man.

SHPIGELSKY: That's the point. You see how easy it is to make a mistake. Because I play the fool to other people, tell them funny stories, and pay court to them, you immediately assumed that I was really a jolly fellow. If I had no need for them, those strangers, I wouldn't even look at them. . . . And even so, whenever I can—without any great danger, you know—I hold those very people up to ridicule. . . . However, I don't deceive myself. I know that some people, who need my services at every step, and who are bored when I am gone, nevertheless think they have the right to despise me. But I give them as good as I get. Now take Natalya Petrovna, for instance. . . . You think that I don't see through her? (*Taking her off.*) "My dear doctor, I really am very fond of you. . . . You have such a sharp tongue. . . ." Hee, hee! Coo, dovey, coo! Oh, those fine ladies! They smile at you, and they screw up their eyes this way—and condescending contempt is written on their faces. . . . They scorn men like me, but what can you do about it! I understand why she is giving a poor report of me to-day. Really, these fine ladies are a surprising lot of people! Because they wash themselves every day with cologne, and speak with a certain carelessness, as if they were dropping words—"You can pick 'em up," they tell you—they imagine that you can't catch 'em by the tail. Well, can't you, though! They are just such mortals as all the rest of us sinners.

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA: Ignaty Ilyich, you surprise me.

SHPIGELSKY: I knew I should surprise you. You see I'm not a jolly man at all, possibly not even a very kind man. . . . But I do not wish to pass in your eyes for something that I have never been. However much I show off before the gentlefolk, no one ever saw me

a buffoon, and no one ever slapped my face. I may say that they are even a bit afraid of me. They know that I bite. Once, three years ago, a certain gentleman, a country squire, was foolish enough at table to stick a radish into my hair. What do you think happened? Immediately—without getting excited, you know—in the most courteous fashion, I challenged him to a duel. My squire almost got paralysis with terror. My host made him apologize. The effect was startling. . . . I must confess I knew in advance that he wouldn't fight. So you see, Lizaveta Bogdanovna, I have a huge amount of self-esteem—but so it is. I have also no great talent, and I had only a helter-skelter education. I am a poor doctor. I have no need of dissembling to you, and if you ever fall ill here, it is not I who will treat you. If I had talent and education, I should hurry off to the capital. But for the inhabitants of these parts, of course, no better doctor is necessary. As for my personal character, I must forewarn you, Lizaveta Bogdanovna: at home I am glum, silent and exacting. I do not get angry when people humor me and show respect to me. I like to have them note my habits and give me tasty food, but all the same I am not jealous and not stingy, and in my absence you can do anything you choose. Any romantic love between us you need not expect. But nevertheless, I imagine you will find it possible to live under one roof with me, so long as you humor me and don't weep in my presence—I can't stand that! And I don't pick quarrels. There's my whole confession. Well, what will you say now?

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA: What can I say to you, Ignaty Ilyich? . . . If you have not purposely blackened yourself—

SHPIGELSKY: But how did I blacken myself? Do not forget that another man in my place would calmly have kept quiet about his own defects, seeing that you had noticed nothing. But after the marriage is over—after the marriage it's too late. But I am too proud for that. (LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA *glances at him.*) Yes, yes, too proud. . . . Why won't you look at me? I have no intention of deceiving my future wife and lying to her, not for a hundred thousand, to say nothing of fifteen. But I will bow down humbly to a stranger for the sake of a sack of flour. Such is my character. . . . To a stranger I grin and I think within me: "What a blockhead, my boy, to be caught with such a bait!" But with you I say what I think. That is, if you will permit me, I do not tell you everything that I think, but at any rate, I don't deceive you. I must seem to you a great freak, to be sure. But just wait, sometime I will tell you the story of my life. You will be surprised that I am still so well preserved. I don't think that in your childhood you ate off of gold plates. But nevertheless, my darling, you can't understand what genuine hardpan poverty is like. . . . However, I

will tell you all this at some other time. Now, then, you had better think over what I have had the honor to report to you. . . . Think over this little matter well by yourself, and then give me your decision. So far as I have been able to observe, you are a woman of good judgment. You . . . By the way, how old are you?

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA: I . . . I . . . am thirty.

SHPIGELSKY (*calmly*): That's not true. You are all of forty.

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA (*flushing up*): Not forty at all, but thirty-six.

SHPIGELSKY: That's more than thirty, anyway. Well, you must lose this habit, Lizaveta Bogdanovna . . . the more so as a married woman is by no means old at thirty-six. You also make a mistake in taking snuff. (*Rising.*) But I think the shower has stopped.

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA (*also rising*): Yes, it has.

SHPIGELSKY: So you will give me the answer in a few days?

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA: I will tell you my decision to-morrow.

SHPIGELSKY: Well, I like that. . . . That's sensible. So sensible! Good for you, Lizaveta Bogdanovna. Well, give me your hand. Let's go in the house.

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA (*giving him her hand*): Come on!

SHPIGELSKY: And, by the way, I haven't kissed it. . . . And that's obligatory, I think. . . . Let this be done at all hazards! (*Kisses her hand.* LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA *blushes.*) There now! (*He goes towards the garden door.*)

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA (*stopping*): So you think, Ignaty Ilyich, that Mikhaylo Alexandrovich is really not a dangerous man?

SHPIGELSKY: That's what I think.

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA: Let me tell you, Ignaty Ilyich, it seems to me that Natalya Petrovna for some time . . . It seems to me that Mr. Belyayev . . . She is paying attention to him, isn't she? And Verochka, what do you think about her? Wasn't that the reason that to-day—

SHPIGELSKY (*interrupting her*): I forgot to tell you one thing, Lizaveta Bogdanovna: I myself am awfully curious, but I can't stand curious women. Let me explain. In my opinion, a wife should be curious and observant—that is really useful for her husband—but only with outsiders. You understand me? With outsiders. However, if you insist on knowing my opinion about Natalya Petrovna, Vera Alexandrovna, Mr. Belyayev, and in general, the inhabitants of this house, just listen while I sing you a song. I have a wretched voice, but don't expect too much.

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA (*with surprise*): A song!

SHPIGELSKY: Listen, first stanza! (*Sings first verse.*)

Grandma had a little goat, gray goat;
Grandma had a little goat, gray goat:
Hey hey! ha ha! a little goat!
Hey hey! ha ha! a little goat!

Second stanza! (*Sings.*)

Goatie wished to roam the woods, the woods;
Goatie wished to roam the woods, the woods:
Hey hey! ha ha! to roam the woods!
Hey hey! ha ha! to roam the woods!

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA: But I really don't understand.

SHPIGELSKY: Listen! Third stanza! (*Sings.*)

Great gray wolves ate up the goat, the goat;
Great gray wolves ate up the goat, the goat: (*Cutting a caper.*)
Hey hey! ha ha! ate up the goat!
Hey hey! ha ha! ate up the goat!

And now, let's come on. By the way, I must have a talk with Natalya Petrovna. I don't think she'll bite me. If I'm not mistaken, I'm still necessary to her. Come on! (*They go out into the garden.*)

KATYA (*cautiously emerging from behind the column*): I thought they'd never go! How spiteful that doctor is! . . . He talked and talked, how he talked! And how he does sing! I'm afraid that meanwhile Alexey Nikolayevich may have returned to the house . . . and they needed to come to this very spot! (*Goes to the window.*) So Lizaveta Bogdanovna will be a doctor's wife. . . . (*Laughing.*) What a woman! . . . Well, I don't envy her. . . . (*Looking out of the window.*) The grass looks as if it had been washed. . . . What a lovely fragrance! . . . It's from the cherry tree. Ah, so here he comes! (*After waiting a moment.*) Alexey Nikolayevich! . . . Alexey Nikolayevich!

BELYAYEV (*off stage*): Who is calling me? Oh, is that you, Katya? (*Comes up to the window.*) What do you want?

KATYA: Come in here. . . . I want to tell you something.

BELYAYEV: Oh, all right. (*He goes away from the window and in a moment comes in at the door.*) Here I am.

KATYA: You didn't get wet in the shower?

BELYAYEV: No. . . . I was sitting in the hothouse with Potap. . . . Is he your uncle or something of the sort?

KATYA: Yes, he's my uncle.

BELYAYEV: How pretty you are to-day! (*KATYA smiles and lowers her eyes. He takes a peach out of his pocket.*) Will you have it?

KATYA (*declining*): Thank you kindly. . . . Eat it yourself.

BELYAYEV: But did I decline when you brought me some raspberries yesterday? Take it. I picked it for you. . . . Honest.

KATYA: Well, thank you. (*Takes the peach.*)

BELYAYEV: That's right. Well then, what did you want to tell me?

KATYA: The young lady . . . Vera Alexandrovna . . . asked me. . . . She wants to see you.

BELYAYEV: Oh! Well, I'll go to her directly.

KATYA: No. She is coming here herself. She wants to have a talk with you.

BELYAYEV (*with marked amazement*): She wants to come here?

KATYA: Yes, here. Here, you know. . . . Nobody comes here. Here you won't be interrupted. (*Sighing.*) She loves you very much, Alexey Nikolayevich. . . . She is so kind. Now I'll go for her, shall I? And you'll wait here?

BELYAYEV: Of course, of course.

KATYA: Right away. (*She goes off and stops.*) Alexey Nikolayevich, is it true, as they say, that you are leaving us?

BELYAYEV: I? No. . . . Who told you that?

KATYA: Then you are not leaving? Well, thank Heaven! (*With confusion.*) I'll return directly. (*She goes out by the door leading to the house.*)

BELYAYEV (*remains motionless for some time*): What marvels! Marvels are certainly happening to me. I confess I never expected this. . . . Vera loves me. . . . Natalya Petrovna knows it. . . . Vera herself confessed everything to her. . . . Marvels! Vera is such a dear, kind child. But . . . but what does this note mean, for instance? (*Takes out of his pocket a small bit of paper.*) From Natalya Petrovna . . . written in pencil: "Do not go away. Do not decide on anything until I have discussed matters with you." What does she want to talk over with me? (*After a pause.*) What stupid thoughts come into my head! I confess all this disturbs me extremely. If any one had told me a month ago that I . . . I . . . I can't recover my senses after that conversation with Natalya Petrovna. Why is my heart beating so fast? Now it's Vera that wants to see me. What shall I tell her! At any rate, I will find out what the matter is. . . . Perhaps Natalya Petrovna is angry with me. . . . But why? (*He looks at the note again.*) All this is strange, very strange.

(*The door quietly opens. He quickly hides the note. VERA and KATYA appear on the threshold. He goes up to them. VERA is very pale. She does not raise her eyes and does not move from the spot.*)

KATYA: Don't be afraid, young lady, go up to him. I'll stand guard. . . . Don't be afraid. (*To BELYAYEV.*) Oh, Alexey Nikolayevich! (*She closes the window, goes into the garden, and shuts the door behind her.*)

BELYAYEV: Vera Alexandrovna, you wanted to see me. Come here. Sit down here. (*He takes her arm and leads her to the bench. VERA sits down.*) That's the way. (*Looking at her with surprise.*) Have you been crying?

VERA (*without raising her eyes*): That's nothing. I've come to ask your forgiveness, Alexey Nikolayevich.

BELYAYEV: What for?

VERA: I heard that you had . . . an unpleasant explanation with Natalya Petrovna. . . . You are going away. . . . You have been discharged.

BELYAYEV: Who told you that?

VERA: Natalya Petrovna herself. . . . I met her after your explanation with her. . . . She told me that you yourself did not care to stay with us longer. But I think that she discharged you.

BELYAYEV: Tell me, do the people in the house know it?

VERA: No . . . only Katya. . . . I had to tell her. . . . I wanted to speak with you and to ask your forgiveness. But please just imagine how hard this must be for me. I am the cause of it all, Alexey Nikolayevich; I am the only one to blame.

BELYAYEV: You, Vera Alexandrovna?

VERA: I didn't expect it at all. . . . Natalya Petrovna . . . However, I excuse her. And you must excuse me. . . . This morning I was a stupid child, but now . . . (*She stops.*)

BELYAYEV: There is nothing decided yet, Vera Alexandrovna. . . . Maybe I shall stay.

VERA (*sadly*): You say that nothing is decided, Alexey Nikolayevich. . . . No, everything is decided; everything is ended. You see how you are behaving to me now. But do you remember—only yesterday in the garden. . . . (*After a pause.*) Ah, I see, Natalya Petrovna has told you everything.

BELYAYEV (*confused*): Vera Alexandrovna . . .

VERA: She has told you everything; I can see that. . . . She wanted to catch me, and I was just silly enough to throw myself into her net. . . . But she betrayed herself too. . . . Anyhow, I am not a child any longer. (*Lowering her voice.*) Oh, no!

BELYAYEV: What do you mean?

VERA (*glancing at him*): Alexey Nikolayevich, do you really want to leave us yourself?

BELYAYEV: Yes.

VERA: Why? (*BELYAYEV is silent.*) You do not answer me?

BELYAYEV: Vera Alexandrovna, you were not mistaken. Natalya Petrovna did tell me everything.

VERA (*in a weak voice*): What, for instance?

BELYAYEV: Vera Alexandrovna, it is really impossible . . . for me. . . . You understand me.

VERA: Perhaps she told you that I was in love with you?

BELYAYEV (*indecisively*): Yes.

VERA (*quickly*): But that's not true.

BELYAYEV (*taken aback*): What?

VERA (*covering her face with her hands and whispering through her fingers in a choked voice.*) At any rate, I didn't tell her that. I don't remember. (*Raising her head.*) Oh, how cruelly she acted towards me! And you . . . Is that why you wanted to leave?

BELYAYEV: Vera Alexandrovna, consider yourself. . . .

VERA (*glancing at him*): He doesn't love me! (*Again covers her face.*)

BELYAYEV (*sitting down near her and taking her hands*): Give me your hand. . . . Listen, there must be no misunderstanding between us. I love you as a sister. I love you because I cannot help loving you. Pardon me if I . . . Never in my life have I been in such a position. . . . I don't want to hurt your feelings. . . . I will not dissemble to you. I know that you have come to like me, that you have come to love me. . . . But judge for yourself what the result of this may be. I am only twenty years old, and I haven't a penny. Please do not be angry with me. I really do not know what to say to you.

VERA (*removing her hands from her face and looking at him*): As if I had demanded anything! Good heavens! But why do you act so cruelly, so mercilessly? (*She stops.*)

BELYAYEV: I did not wish to grieve you, Vera Alexandrovna.

VERA: I do not blame you, Alexey Nikolayevich. How are you to blame? I am the only one to blame. . . . That is why I am punished. I do not blame even her. I know that she is a good woman, but she could not restrain herself. . . . She lost her self-control.

BELYAYEV (*with perplexity*): Lost her self-control?

VERA (*turning to him*): Natalya Petrovna is in love with you, Belyayev.

BELYAYEV: What?

VERA: She is in love with you.

BELYAYEV: What are you saying?

VERA: I know what I am saying. To-day has aged me. . . . I am no longer a child, believe me. She took upon herself to be jealous . . . of me! (*With a bitter smile.*) How do you like that?

BELYAYEV: But that is impossible!

VERA: Impossible! . . . But why did she suddenly form the idea of marrying me to that gentleman, what's his name, Bolshintsov? Why did she send the doctor to me? Why did she herself try to persuade me? Oh, I know what I am saying! If you could have seen, Belyayev, how her face changed when I told her! . . . Oh, you cannot imagine how cunningly, how craftily, she extorted this confession from me. . . . Yes, she loves you. That is only too clear.

BELYAYEV: You are mistaken, Vera Alexandrovna, I assure you.

VERA: No, I am not mistaken. Believe me, I am not mistaken. If she does not love you, why did she torture me so? What have I done to her? (*Bitterly.*) Jealousy excuses everything! But what is the use of talking! . . . Even now, why does she dismiss you? . . . She thinks that you . . . that you and I . . . Oh, she may be at ease! You may remain here! (*She covers her face with her hands.*)

BELYAYEV: She has not yet discharged me, Vera Alexandrovna. . . . I have already told you that nothing is yet decided.

VERA (*suddenly raising her head and looking at him*): Really?

BELYAYEV: Yes. . . . But why are you looking at me in this way?

VERA (*as if to herself*): Ah, I understand. . . . Yes, yes. . . . She . . . she herself still has hopes.

(*The door to the corridor opens suddenly and on the threshold appears NATALYA PETROVNA. She stops at the sight of VERA and BELYAYEV.*)

BELYAYEV: What are you saying?

VERA: Yes, everything is clear to me now. . . . She has come to herself. She understands that I am not dangerous to her. And really, what do I amount to? I am a stupid girl, and she—!

BELYAYEV: How can you think, Vera Alexandrovna . . . ?

VERA: And anyway, who knows? Perhaps she is right. . . . Perhaps you do love her.

BELYAYEV: I?

VERA (*rising*): Yes, you. Why do you blush?

BELYAYEV: I, Vera Alexandrovna?

VERA: Do you love her? Can you fall in love with her? . . . You do not answer my question.

BELYAYEV: But consider: what do you wish me to reply to you? You are so excited, Vera Alexandrovna. . . . Calm yourself, for Heaven's sake!

VERA (*turning away from him*): You behave towards me as if I were a child. . . . You do not even think me worth a serious answer. . . . You simply want to get rid of me. . . . You are comforting me! (*She is about to leave, but suddenly stops at the sight of NATALYA PETROVNA.*) Natalya Petrovna! (*BELYAYEV looks around quickly.*)

NATALYA PETROVNA (*making a few steps forward*): Yes, it is I. (*She speaks with a certain effort.*) I have come for you, Verochka.

VERA (*slowly and coldly*): Why did you think of coming to this place of all others? So you have been looking for me?

NATALYA PETROVNA: Yes, I have been looking for you. You are indiscreet, Verochka. . . . I have already cautioned you several times. . . . And you, Alexey Nikolayevich, you have forgotten your promise. . . . You have deceived me.

VERA: Oh, do stop, Natalya Petrovna; do please stop! (NATALYA PETROVNA *looks at her with amazement.*) You needn't talk to me as you would to a child any longer. (*Lowering her voice.*) I am a woman from this day forward. . . . I am just as much a woman as you.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*in confusion*): Vera!

VERA (*almost in a whisper*): He did not deceive you. . . . It was not he who sought for this interview with me. He is not in love with me, you know that. You have no occasion to be jealous.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*with rising amazement*): Vera!

VERA: Believe me! . . . Do not be crafty any more. These crafty devices are of no further use to you now. . . . I see through them now. Believe me that I do. Natalya Petrovna, I am no longer your protégée whom you watch over (*With irony.*) as an elder sister. . . . (*Moving towards her.*) I am your rival.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Vera, you forget yourself.

VERA: Perhaps. . . . But who has brought me to this pass? I do not understand myself how I dare to speak to you in this way. . . . Perhaps I am speaking thus because I no longer have any hopes, because you have been good enough to trample me in the dust. . . . And you succeeded in doing so . . . completely. But listen to me: I do not intend to dissemble with you, if you do not with me. . . . Be sure of that. I have told him everything. (*Indicating BELYAYEV.*)

NATALYA PETROVNA: What could you tell him?

VERA: What? (*With irony.*) Why, everything that I have been able to observe. You hoped to learn everything from me without giving yourself away. You made a mistake, Natalya Petrovna. You were too confident of your own strength.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Vera, Vera, recollect yourself.

VERA (*in a whisper and coming still nearer to her*): Tell me that I made a mistake. . . . Tell me that you do not love him. . . . He has told me that he does not love me! (NATALYA PETROVNA *is silent with amazement. VERA remains immovable for some time, and suddenly puts her hand to her brow.*) Natalya Petrovna, forgive me! . . . I . . . do not know myself . . . what is the matter with me. Pardon me; be

indulgent to me. (*She bursts into tears and quickly goes out by the corridor door. A pause.*)

BELYAYEV (*going up to NATALYA PETROVNA*): I may assure you, Natalya Petrovna . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA (*looking fixedly at the floor and stretching out her hand towards him*): Stop, Alexey Nikolayevich. Really . . . Vera is right. . . . It is time . . . it is time for me to stop dissembling. I have done her wrong and done you wrong. You have the right to despise me. (*BELYAYEV makes an involuntary movement.*) I have lowered myself in my own eyes. I have left only one means of again winning your regard: frankness, complete frankness, whatever may be the consequences. Besides that, I now see you for the last time, and now speak to you for the last time. I love you. (*She gazes fixedly at him.*)

BELYAYEV: You, Natalya Petrovna!

NATALYA PETROVNA: Yes, I. I love you. Vera was not deceived and did not deceive you. I fell in love with you the very first day of your arrival, but I recognized this myself only yesterday. I do not intend to justify my conduct. . . . It was unworthy of me . . . but at least you now can understand, can excuse me. Yes, I was jealous of Vera. Yes, in my thoughts I married her to Bolshintsov in order to remove her from myself and from you. Yes, I took advantage of my greater age, of my position in society, to find out her secret and—of course I didn't expect this—I betrayed myself. I love you, Belyayev, but be sure of this, only pride forces this confession from me. . . . The farce that I have played up till now has at last disgusted me. You cannot remain here. . . . However, after what I have just told you, it will doubtless be very embarrassing for you in my presence, and you yourself will wish to withdraw from here as quickly as may be. I am convinced of that. This conviction has given me boldness. I confess I did not wish you to carry away a bad memory of me. Now you know everything. . . . Perhaps I have hindered you. Perhaps if all this had not happened, you would have fallen in love with Verochka. . . . I have only one excuse, Alexey Nikolayevich. . . . All this was beyond my power. (*She becomes silent. She says all this in a rather even and calm voice, without looking at BELYAYEV. He is silent. She continues with a certain agitation, still without looking at him.*) You do not answer me? . . . However, I understand that. You have nothing to tell me. The position of a man who does not love but who receives a declaration of love is altogether too difficult. I thank you for your silence. Believe me: when I told you . . . that I loved you . . . I was not dissembling . . . as I had been before. I did not count on anything. On the contrary, I wished finally to throw off the mask, to which, I may

assure you, I was not accustomed. . . . And finally, why should I coquette and dissemble any longer when all is known? Why should I play the hypocrite any more when there is no one to deceive? All is ended between us. I will not detain you any longer. You may leave here without saying a word to me, without even bidding me farewell. I shall not even regard that as a discourtesy. On the contrary, I shall be grateful to you. There are occasions in which delicacy is out of place . . . worse than rudeness. Evidently it was not fated for us to understand each other. Farewell! No, it was not fated for us to understand each other . . . but at least I hope that now, in your eyes, I have ceased to be an oppressive, secretive, and cunning creature. . . . Farewell forever! (*BELYAYEV in agitation tries to say something, but cannot.*) You are not leaving?

BELYAYEV (*bowing, is about to leave, but after a short struggle with himself returns*): No, I cannot leave. (*NATALYA PETROVNA for the first time looks at him.*) I cannot leave in this way! . . . Listen, Natalya Petrovna, you have just told me . . . you do not desire me to carry away an unfavorable memory of you, and for my part I do not wish you to remember me as a man who . . . Good Heavens! I do not know how to express myself! . . . Natalya Petrovna, excuse me. . . . I do not know how to speak with ladies. . . . Up till now I have known . . . women of an altogether different sort. You say that we are not fated to understand each other, but consider: could I, a simple, almost uneducated boy—could I even think of any intimacy with you? Remember who you are and who I am! Remember: could I even think . . . ? With your education. . . . But why do I speak of education? . . . Look at me. . . . This old coat and your fragrant garments! . . . Consider! Yes, I was afraid of you, and I am afraid of you now! . . . Without any exaggeration I looked upon you as a higher being . . . and at the same time . . . you, you tell me that you love me. You, Natalya Petrovna, love me! . . . I feel my heart beating within me as it has never beat in my life. It beats not from amazement only. It is not my self-conceit that is flattered. . . . Why so! . . . It is not a question of self-conceit now . . . but I . . . I cannot leave in this way, if you will permit me to say so!

NATALYA PETROVNA (*after a pause, as if to herself*): What have I done?

BELYAYEV: Natalya Petrovna, believe me, please, for God's sake! . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA (*in a changed voice*): Alexey Nikolayevich, if I did not know you as a gentleman, as a man to whom falsehood is impossible, I should think the Lord knows what. Perhaps I should repent my own frankness. But I believe you. I do not wish to hide my feelings from you. I thank you for what you have just now told

me. Now I know why we have not become intimate. . . . And so it was not my own personality, it was nothing in me that repelled you. . . . It was only my position. . . . (*Stopping.*) All this makes things better, of course. . . . And now it will be easier for me to part with you . . . farewell! (*She is about to leave.*)

BELYAYEV (*after a pause*): I know, Natalya Petrovna, that I cannot stay here. . . . But I cannot make you understand all that is going on within me. You love me! . . . It is terrible for me even to pronounce those words! . . . All this is so new to me. . . . It seems to me that I see you, hear you, for the first time. But I feel one thing. It is indispensable for me to go away. . . . I feel that I cannot be responsible for anything that may happen.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*in a feeble voice*): Yes, Belyayev, you must go away. . . . Now, after this explanation, you must go away. . . . But is it really possible, notwithstanding all that I have done? . . . Oh, believe me, if I had suspected even distantly all that you have told me, that confession would have died within me. . . . I merely wished to put an end to all the misunderstandings. I wished to repent, to punish myself. I wished once for all to snap the last thread. If I could have imagined—! (*She covers her face with her hands.*)

BELYAYEV: I believe you, Natalya Petrovna, I believe you. But I myself, a quarter of an hour ago . . . did I imagine? . . . Only to-day, during the time of our last meeting before dinner, did I feel for the first time something unusual, something unwonted, as if some one's hand were gripping my heart; and I felt such ardent warmth in my bosom. . . . Really, formerly I held myself aloof from you, as it were, I even seemed to dislike you, but when you told me to-day that Vera Alexandrovna thought . . . (*He pauses.*)

NATALYA PETROVNA (*with an involuntary smile of happiness on her lips*): Enough, enough, Belyayev. We must not think of that. We must not forget that we are speaking to each other for the last time . . . that you leave to-morrow.

BELYAYEV: Oh, yes! I shall leave to-morrow. I may still leave now. . . . All this will pass. . . . You see, I do not wish to exaggerate. . . . I am going. . . . And then as God wills! I shall carry away with me one memory; I shall remember eternally that you loved me. . . . But how is it that I never knew you before? . . . Here you are looking at me now. . . . Is it possible that I ever tried to avoid your glance? . . . Is it possible that I ever felt timidity in your presence?

NATALYA PETROVNA (*with a smile*): You just now told me that you were afraid of me.

BELYAYEV: I? (*After a pause.*) To be sure. . . . I am surprised at

myself. . . . Do I—I speak so boldly to you? I do not recognize myself.

NATALYA PETROVNA: And you are not deceiving yourself?

BELYAYEV: In what?

NATALYA PETROVNA: In thinking that you love me? (*With a shudder.*) Oh, Heavens, what am I doing? Listen, Belyayev. . . . Come to my aid. . . . No woman ever found herself in such a position before. I have no more strength, truly. . . . Perhaps it is better thus. Everything has been cut off at one blow. But we, at least, have come to understand each other. . . . Give me your hand—and farewell forever!

BELYAYEV (*taking her hand*): Natalya Petrovna. . . . I do not know what to say to you in farewell. . . . My heart is so full. . . . God grant you. . . .! (*He stops and presses her hand to his lips.*) Farewell! (*He is about to leave by the door into the garden.*)

NATALYA PETROVNA (*gazing after him*): Belyayev!

BELYAYEV (*turning around*): Natalya Petrovna!

NATALYA PETROVNA (*after a considerable pause, in a weak voice*): Remain!

BELYAYEV: What?

NATALYA PETROVNA: Remain! And let God pass judgment on us! (*She buries her head in her hands.*)

BELYAYEV (*quickly approaching her and stretching out his hands to her*): Natalya Petrovna!

(*At that moment the door into the garden opens and RAKITIN appears on the threshold. He looks at them both for some time and suddenly approaches them.*)

RAKITIN (*in a loud voice*): They are looking for you everywhere, Natalya Petrovna. (NATALYA PETROVNA and BELYAYEV glance around.)

NATALYA PETROVNA (*removing her hands from her face and seeming to come to herself*): Ah, is that you? Who is looking for me? (BELYAYEV, *confused, bows to NATALYA PETROVNA and is about to leave.*) Are you going, Alexey Nikolayevich? . . . Don't forget, you know—(*He bows to her a second time and goes out into the garden.*)

RAKITIN: Arkady is looking for you. . . . I confess I didn't expect to find you here. . . . But as I was passing by. . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA (*with a smile*): You heard our voices. . . . I met Alexey Nikolayevich here. . . . and I had a long explanation with him. . . . To-day is evidently a day of explanations, but now we can go to the house. (*She is about to leave by the corridor door.*)

RAKITIN (*with some agitation*): May I inquire. . . . what decision? . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA (*pretending to be surprised*): What decision? . . . I don't understand you.

RAKITIN (*after a long silence, in a gloomy voice*): In that case I understand everything.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Well, so it is. . . . Again mysterious hints! Well, yes, I have had an explanation with him, and now everything is straightened out again. . . . Those were trifles, exaggerations. . . . Everything that you and I have been speaking of is all childishness. We must forget it now.

RAKITIN: I am not cross-examining you, Natalya Petrovna.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*forcing herself to speak casually*): What was it I wanted to tell you? . . . I don't remember. It's all the same. Come on. All that is over now. . . . It's all past.

RAKITIN (*looking at her fixedly*): Oh, it's all over. And how vexed you are with yourself now, most likely . . . because of your frankness to-day!

NATALYA PETROVNA (*turning away from him*): Rakitin. . . . (*He again glances at her. She evidently does not know what to say.*) You haven't spoken with Arkady yet?

RAKITIN: By no means. . . . I haven't yet managed to prepare myself. . . . You understand that I need to make up something.

NATALYA PETROVNA: How unbearable this is! What do they want of me? They follow after me at every step. Really, Rakitin, I feel ashamed to see you.

RAKITIN: Oh, don't be disturbed, Natalya Petrovna. . . . Why should you be? This is all in the natural course of things. But one can see that Mr. Belyayev is still a novice! And why was he so confused? Why did he run away? . . . However, in the course of time . . . (*In a low, hurried voice.*) you will both learn how to dissemble. (*Aloud.*) Come on.

(*NATALYA PETROVNA is about to come up to him, but stops. At that moment the voice of ISLAYEV is heard just outside the garden door: "He came this way, you say?" After these words, ISLAYEV and SHEPIGELSKY come in.*)

ISLAYEV: To be sure, there he is.—Bah, bah, bah! And Natalya Petrovna is here too! (*Coming up to her.*) What's this? A continuation of to-day's explanation?—Evidently it's an important subject.

RAKITIN: I met Natalya Petrovna here.

ISLAYEV: Met her? (*Looking around.*) What a frequented place, to be sure!

NATALYA PETROVNA: But you came here yourself.

ISLAYEV: I came here because . . . (*He stops.*)

NATALYA PETROVNA: You were looking for me?

ISLAYEV (*after a pause*): Yes, I was looking for you. Would you not like to come back to the house? Tea is ready. It will be dark soon.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*taking his hand*): Come on, then.

ISLAYEV (*looking around*): And we can make this hall into two good rooms for the gardeners—or another servant's room—what do you think about it, Shpigelsky?

SHPIGELSKY: Of course.

ISLAYEV: Come on through the garden, Natasha. (*He goes out by the door into the garden. During the course of all this scene, he has not once glanced at RAKITIN. On the threshold he half turns around.*) Well, folks, come on and have tea. (*He goes out with NATALYA PETROVNA.*)

SHPIGELSKY (*to RAKITIN*): Well, Mikhaylo Alexandrovich, come on! . . . Give me your hand. . . . Evidently fate has cast us into the rear guard.

RAKITIN (*testily*): Oh, Mr. Doctor, permit me to tell you, I am decidedly sick of you.

SHPIGELSKY (*with affected good humor*): But I am sick of myself, Mikhaylo Alexandrovich, if you did but know it! (*RAKITIN smiles involuntarily.*) Come on, come on. (*They both go out by the door into the garden.*)

ACT V

The scene is the same as in Acts I and III. Morning. ISLAYEV is sitting at his desk looking over papers. He rises suddenly.

ISLAYEV: No, I absolutely can't work to-day. It's as if a nail were run through my head. (*Pacing the room.*) I must confess I didn't expect this. I didn't expect that I should be disturbed . . . as I am now. . . . What shall I do then? . . . That's the problem. (*Falls to thinking and suddenly calls.*) Matvey!

MATVEY (*coming in*): What will you have, sir?

ISLAYEV: Call my overseer . . . and tell the diggers to wait for me at the dam. . . . Go along!

MATVEY: Yes, sir. (*Goes out.*)

ISLAYEV (*going to the table again. Running through his papers*): Yes, that's the problem.

ANNA SEMENOVNA (*coming in and approaching ISLAYEV*): Arkasha!

ISLAYEV: Oh, is that you, mamma? How are you feeling?

ANNA SEMENOVNA (*sitting down on the couch*): I am well, thank Heaven! (*Sighing.*) I'm well. (*Sighing still louder.*) Thank Heaven! (*Seeing that ISLAYEV does not listen to her, she gives a very vigorous sigh, with a slight groan.*)

ISLAYEV: You are sighing. . . . What's the matter with you?

ANNA SEMENOVNA (*again sighing, but this time more gently*): Oh, Arkasha, as if you didn't know what I am sighing about.

ISLAYEV: What do you mean?

ANNA SEMENOVNA (*after a pause*): I am your mother, Arkasha. Of course you are already a grown man, and a man of sense. But all the same, I am your mother. That is a great word, mother!

ISLAYEV: Oh, please explain yourself!

ANNA SEMENOVNA: You know what I am hinting at, my dear. Your wife Natasha . . . Of course, she is a splendid woman—and her conduct up till now has been most exemplary . . . but she is still so young, Arkasha! And youth . . .

ISLAYEV: I understand what you mean. . . . It seems to you that her relations with Rakitin—

ANNA SEMENOVNA: God forbid! I wasn't thinking of that at all.

ISLAYEV: You didn't let me finish my speech. . . . It seems to you that her relations with Rakitin . . . are not quite . . . plain. . . . Those mysterious conversations, those tears—all that seems to you strange.

ANNA SEMENOVNA: Well, Arkasha, did he finally tell you what those conversations of theirs were about? . . . He hasn't told me anything.

ISLAYEV: I haven't cross-examined him, and he evidently is in no great hurry to gratify my curiosity.

ANNA SEMENOVNA: So what do you intend to do now?

ISLAYEV: I, mamma? Nothing at all.

ANNA SEMENOVNA: Nothing?

ISLAYEV: Certainly. Nothing.

ANNA SEMENOVNA (*rising*): I confess that I am surprised. Of course you are the master in your own house, and you know better than I what's good and what's bad. However, consider what consequences . . .

ISLAYEV: Really, mamma, you are quite wrong in being disturbed.

ANNA SEMENOVNA: My dear, I am a mother. . . . But, however, as you think best. (*After a pause.*) I came to see you, I must confess, with the intention of offering my services as mediator.

ISLAYEV (*with animation*): No. In this matter, I must ask you not to trouble yourself, mamma. . . . Please oblige me!

ANNA SEMENOVNA: As you wish, Arkasha; as you wish. I won't say a word more. I have forewarned you, I have done my duty. But now—my lips are sealed. (*A short silence.*)

ISLAYEV: You aren't going anywhere to-day?

ANNA SEMENOVNA: But I merely felt obliged to forewarn you. You are too trustful, my dear boy. You judge every one by yourself! Believe me, true friends are very rare in these times!

ISLAYEV (*with impatience*): Mamma! . . .

ANNA SEMENOVNA: Well, I am silent, I am silent! And why should an old woman like me mix in? I suppose I have outlived my wits! And I was brought up on other principles and I tried to teach them to you. . . . Well, well, attend to your business. I won't hinder you. . . . I am going. (*She goes to the door and stops.*) Well, then? . . . Well, as you wish, as you wish. (*She goes out.*)

ISLAYEV (*gazing after her*): Why is it that people who really love you like to put each and every one of their fingers in your wound? And yet they are convinced that this makes it easier for you—that's what's amusing! However, I don't blame mother. Her intentions, I know, are of the best, and how can she help giving advice? But that is not the point. . . . (*Sitting down.*) How shall I act? (*After reflecting, he rises.*) Ah, the simplest way is the best! Diplomatic finesse doesn't suit me. . . . I am the first to get entangled in it. (*He rings the bell. MATVEY comes in.*) Is Mikhaylo Alexandrovich in the house? Do you know?

MATVEY: He is. I just saw him in the billiard room.

ISLAYEV: Ah! Then ask him to come to see me.

MATVEY: Very well, sir. (*He goes out.*)

ISLAYEV (*walking back and forth*): I am not used to such perplexities. . . . I hope they won't be often repeated. . . . Although I am of a strong build, I couldn't stand this for long. (*Putting his hand to his breast.*) Ah! . . . (*RAKITIN comes in from the hall in some confusion.*)

RAKITIN: Did you call me?

ISLAYEV: Yes. . . . (*After a pause.*) Michel, you owe me something.

RAKITIN: I?

ISLAYEV: Certainly. Have you forgotten your promise about . . . Natasha's tears . . . and in general? . . . You remember how mother and I found you. . . . You told me then that there was a secret between Natasha and yourself that you wished to explain to me.

RAKITIN: Did I say *secret*?

ISLAYEV: Yes.

RAKITIN: But what secret can there be between us? We were just talking.

ISLAYEV: What about? And why was she weeping?

RAKITIN: You know, Arkady . . . moments occur in the life of a woman . . . even the happiest . . .

ISLAYEV: Wait a bit, Rakitin. You can't act this way—I can't see you in such a position. . . . Your confusion is more embarrassing for me than for yourself. (*Taking him by the hand.*) You see, you and

I are old friends. . . . You have known me from childhood. . . . I am unable to dissemble. . . . And you have always been frank with me. Give me permission to ask you one question. . . . I give you my word of honor that I will not doubt the sincerity of your answer. You are in love with my wife, aren't you? (RAKITIN glances at ISLAYEV.) You understand me? You love her . . . well, in a word, you love my wife with the sort of love that is hard to confess to a husband?

RAKITIN (*after a pause. In a hoarse voice*): Yes. I love your wife with that sort of love.

ISLAYEV (*also after a pause*): Thank you for your frankness, Michel. You are a gentleman. Well, anyway, what shall we do now? Sit down and let's consider this matter together. (RAKITIN sits down. ISLAYEV paces the room.) I know Natasha. I know her value. But I also know my own value. I am not your equal, Michel . . . don't interrupt me, please! . . . I am not your equal. You're more clever. You're a finer man. In a word, a more pleasing person than I. I am a simple fellow. Natasha loves me, I think, but she has eyes. . . . Well, in a word, she must like you. And so here's what I'll tell you further. I have long remarked your mutual regard for each other. . . . But I have also been confident of you both—and so far nothing has come to light. . . . Oh, I don't know how to speak of it! (*He stops.*) But after the scene yesterday, after your second meeting in the evening, what can I think? If it were only I who had found you! But witnesses were involved in the case; mamma, and that rascal Shpigelsky. . . . Well, what have you to say, Michel?

RAKITIN: You are quite right, Arkady.

ISLAYEV: That's not the question. . . . But what's to be done? I must tell you, Michel, that though I am a simple man, I have this much sense: I know that it isn't a good thing to embitter another man's life, and there are cases when it is sinful to insist on one's own rights. I didn't read that in books, my friend. . . . Conscience tells me so. If I must give you freedom . . . well, then I'll do so. Only we must think this over. It's too important.

RAKITIN (*rising*): I have thought it over already.

ISLAYEV: Well?

RAKITIN: I must be leaving. . . . I am going away.

ISLAYEV (*after a pause*): Do you think so? . . . To leave us for good and all?

RAKITIN: Yes.

ISLAYEV (*again beginning to pace the room*): What . . . what is this you propose! But perhaps you are right. It will be hard for us without you. . . . Lord knows, perhaps this won't lead to the desired end. . . . But you can see things better; you can judge best. I think

that you have the right idea. You are dangerous to me, my boy. (*With a mournful smile.*) Yes . . . you are dangerous to me. So what I have just said . . . in regard to freedom—but really, I could not live after that! For me to exist without Natasha . . . (*He waves his hand.*) And one thing further, my boy. For some time, especially during these last few days, I have noticed a great change in her. She has given indications of a certain deep, constant agitation, which alarms me. Is not that true? I am not mistaken, am I?

RAKITIN (*bitterly*): Oh, no! You are not mistaken.

ISLAYEV: Well, there, you see! And so you are going away?

RAKITIN: Yes.

ISLAYEV: Hm. And how suddenly this load was shaken off! And really, did you need to be so confused when mother and I found you?

MATVEY (*coming in*): The overseer has come.

ISLAYEV: Let him wait. (*MATVEY goes out.*) Michel, you aren't going to leave us for long, are you? All this is nonsense, my boy!

RAKITIN: I really don't know. . . . I think . . . for a long time.

ISLAYEV: Well, you don't take me for an Othello, do you? Really, since the world was made, I don't think any such conversation has ever taken place between two friends! I cannot part with you in this way.

RAKITIN (*pressing his hand*): You will inform me when it is possible for me to return.

ISLAYEV: But we have no one to replace you here! Certainly not Bolshintsov!

RAKITIN: There are other people here.

ISLAYEV: Who? Krinitsyn? That dandy? Belyayev is of course a good fellow . . . but he is as far below you as he is below the stars of heaven.

RAKITIN (*caustically*): You think so? You don't know him, Arkady. . . . You just pay attention to him. . . . I advise you to. . . . Do you hear? He is a very . . . very remarkable fellow!

ISLAYEV: Bah! You and Natasha were always going to attend to his education. (*Glancing at the door.*) Ah, here he comes himself, I think. . . . (*Hastily.*) And so, my dear fellow, this is decided, you are leaving us . . . for a short time . . . in a day or two. . . . There is no need of haste. We must prepare Natasha. . . . I'll calm mother down. . . . And God grant you happiness! You have moved a stone from my heart. . . . Embrace me, my dear fellow. (*He hastily embraces him, and turns towards BELYAYEV, who has just come in.*) Ah, is that you? Well . . . well . . . how are you?

BELYAYEV: First rate, Arkady Sergeich.

ISLAYEV: Well, where's Kolya?

BELYAYEV: He is with Mr. Schaaf.

ISLAYEV: Ah, fine! (*Taking his hat.*) Well, gentlemen, good-by. I haven't made my daily rounds to-day. I haven't been either at the dam or at the new building. . . . Why, I haven't even looked over my papers. (*Tucks them under his arm.*) Good-by for the moment! Matvey, Matvey, come on with me! (*He goes out.*)

(*RAKITIN remains in the foreground, buried in thought.*)

BELYAYEV (*coming up to RAKITIN*): How do you feel to-day, Mikhaylo Alexandrovich?

RAKITIN: Thank you. As usual. And how are you?

BELYAYEV: I am well.

RAKITIN: That's evident!

BELYAYEV: Why so?

RAKITIN: Why, just . . . by your face. . . . Ah, so you've put on a new frock coat to-day. . . . And what's this I see? A flower in your buttonhole? (*BELYAYEV, blushing, pulls it out.*) But why should you, why should you, pray? . . . It looks very nice. (*After a pause.*) By the way, Alexey Nikolayevich, if you need anything . . . I am going to town to-morrow.

BELYAYEV: To-morrow?

RAKITIN: Yes . . . and from there, perhaps, to Moscow.

BELYAYEV (*with surprise*): To Moscow? But I think you told me only yesterday that you intended to stay here about a month.

RAKITIN: Yes . . . but business . . . circumstances have occurred.

BELYAYEV: And are you leaving for a long time?

RAKITIN: I don't know. . . . Maybe for a long time.

BELYAYEV: Permit me to inquire: Does Natalya Petrovna know of your intention?

RAKITIN: No. Why do you ask me about her in particular?

BELYAYEV: Why? (*With some confusion.*) No special reason.

RAKITIN (*after a pause, and looking round*): Alexey Nikolayevich, I think that there is no one in the room except ourselves. Isn't it strange that we are playing a comedy to each other, eh? What do you think about it?

BELYAYEV: I don't understand you, Mikhaylo Alexandrovich.

RAKITIN: Really? You actually don't understand why I am going away?

BELYAYEV: No.

RAKITIN: That's queer. . . . However, I am ready to believe you. Possibly you really don't know the reason. . . . Do you want me to tell you why I am leaving?

BELYAYEV: Pray do.

RAKITIN: You see, Alexey Nikolayevich—by the way, I rely on your discretion—you found me with Arkady Sergeich just now. . . . He

and I had a rather important conversation, and in consequence of that very conversation I have decided to go away. Do you know why? I am telling you all this because I regard you as a gentleman. . . . He fancies that I . . . that I am in love with Natalya Petrovna. What do you think of that, eh? Isn't it really rather a strange idea? But I am thankful to him that he didn't begin to dissemble and keep watch of us, but that he addressed himself to me frankly and directly. Well now, tell me what should you have done in my place? Of course, his suspicions have no foundation, but they cause him anxiety. . . . For the peace of his friends, a gentleman should know how . . . sometimes, to sacrifice . . . his own pleasure. And that is the reason I am going away. . . . I am convinced that you will approve my decision; will you not? Is it not true that you . . . that you would have acted in just the same way in my place? You, too, would have gone away?

BELYAYEV (*after a pause*): Perhaps.

RAKITIN: I am very glad to hear that. . . . Of course, I don't dispute that in my intention of withdrawing there is a comic side; it is as if I regarded myself as a dangerous person. But you see, Alexey Nikolayevich, the honor of a woman is such an important matter. . . . And besides—of course I don't say this in reference to Natalya Petrovna—but I have known women who were pure and innocent in heart, genuine children in their intellect, who in consequence of that very purity and innocence were more likely than any others to give way to a sudden infatuation. . . . And then, who knows? An excess of caution does no harm in such cases, so much the more that— By the way, Alexey Nikolayevich, perhaps you still have the notion that love is the highest good on earth.

BELYAYEV (*coldly*): I have not experienced that emotion, but I think that to be loved by a woman whom you love must be a great happiness.

RAKITIN: God grant that you long preserve such a pleasant conviction! In my opinion, Alexey Nikolayevich, every love, whether it be happy or unhappy, is a genuine misery when you give yourself up to it entirely. . . . Just wait! You will perhaps find out in the future how those tender little hands know how to torture, with what caressing persistency they tear your heart to bits. . . . Just wait! You will find out how much burning hatred lies hidden under the most ardent love! You will remember me when, as a sick man thirsts for health, you thirst for peace, for the most nonsensical, the most commonplace peace; when you envy every man who is free and has no cares. . . . Just wait! You will learn what it means to belong to a skirt, what it means to be enslaved, to be infected, and how shameful and tormenting is that slavery! . . . You will learn, finally, what trifles are purchased at so high a price. . . . But why am I saying all this

to you? You will not believe me now. The thing is that your approval is very pleasant to me. Yes, yes. In such cases, one should be cautious.

BELYAYEV (*who all this time has gazed fixedly at RAKITIN*): Thank you for the lesson, Mikhaylo Alexandrovich, although I did not need it.

RAKITIN (*taking his hand*): Excuse me, please. I had no intention . . . I am not in a position to give lessons to any man whatsoever. . . . I merely got started talking.

BELYAYEV (*with slight irony*): Without any reason?

RAKITIN (*slightly confused*): That's just it: without any special reason. I merely wished . . . Up to this time, Alexey Nikolayevich, you have had no opportunity of studying women. Women are a very peculiar kind of people.

BELYAYEV: Of whom are you speaking?

RAKITIN: Well, of no one in particular.

BELYAYEV: Of all women in general, I suppose?

RAKITIN (*with a forced smile*): Yes, maybe. I really don't know for what reason I have fallen into this instructive tone, but permit me, in saying farewell, to give you one piece of good advice. (*Stopping and waving his hand.*) Oh, but anyhow, who am I to give advice! Pray excuse my chatter.

BELYAYEV: On the contrary, on the contrary.

RAKITIN: Well then, so you don't need anything from town?

BELYAYEV: No, I thank you. But I am sorry that you are going away.

RAKITIN: I thank you humbly. . . . Pray believe that I, also . . . (*From the door of the study come out NATALYA PETROVNA and VERA. VERA is very sad and pale.*) I have been very glad to make your acquaintance. (*He again presses his hand.*)

NATALYA PETROVNA (*gazes at both for some time, and goes up to them*): How do you do, gentlemen!

RAKITIN (*turning around quickly*): How do you do, Natalya Petrovna! . . . How do you do, Vera Alexandrovna! . . .

(BELYAYEV bows slightly to NATALYA PETROVNA and VERA. He is confused.)

NATALYA PETROVNA (*to RAKITIN*): What in the world are you up to?

RAKITIN: Oh, nothing.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Vera and I have been strolling in the garden. It's so nice out of doors to-day. . . . The lindens have such a sweet fragrance. We strolled all the time under the lindens. . . . It's pleasant in the shade to listen to the humming of the bees over your head. . . . (*Timidly to BELYAYEV.*) We hoped to meet you there. (BELYAYEV is silent.)

RAKITIN (*to NATALYA PETROVNA*): Ah, so you are interested in the beauties of nature to-day. . . . (*After a pause.*) Alexey Nikolayevich could not go into the garden. . . . He has put on his new frock coat to-day.

BELYAYEV (*with a slight flash of temper*): Of course: it's naturally the only frock coat I have, and in the garden I might tear it. Is that what you mean?

RAKITIN (*reddening*): Oh, no! . . . I didn't mean that at all. (*VERA goes silently to the couch on the right, sits down, and takes up some work. NATALYA PETROVNA smiles in a constrained fashion to BELYAYEV. There is a short and rather oppressive silence. RAKITIN continues with biting carelessness.*) Oh, yes, I forgot to tell you, Natalya Petrovna, that I am going away to-day.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*with some agitation*): You are going away? Where to?

RAKITIN: To town. . . . On business.

NATALYA PETROVNA: I hope not for long.

RAKITIN: As business demands.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Be sure to come back soon. (*To BELYAYEV, without looking at him.*) Alexey Nikolayevich, were those your drawings that Kolya was showing me? Were they your work?

BELYAYEV: Yes . . . I . . . trifles.

NATALYA PETROVNA: On the contrary, they are very charming. You have talent.

RAKITIN: I see that you are discovering new excellences every day in Mr. Belyayev.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*coldly*): Possibly. . . . So much the better for him. (*To BELYAYEV.*) Probably you have still other drawings. You will show them to me? (*BELYAYEV bows.*)

RAKITIN (*who all this time seems to be on pins and needles*): However, I recollect that it is time for me to be packing. . . . Good-by for the moment. (*He goes to the door of the hall.*)

NATALYA PETROVNA (*calling after him*): But you will come back to say good-by to us?

RAKITIN: Of course.

BELYAYEV (*after hesitating slightly*): Wait, Mikhaylo Alexandrovich, I'll go with you. I want to say a couple of words to you.

RAKITIN: Ah!

(*They both go out into the hall. NATALYA PETROVNA remains in the middle of the stage. After waiting a short time she sits down at the left.*)

NATALYA PETROVNA (*after a short pause*): Vera!

VERA (*without raising her head*): What do you wish?

NATALYA PETROVNA: For the Lord's sake, Vera, don't act so with me! . . . For the Lord's sake, Vera . . . Verochka! . . .

(VERA says nothing. NATALYA PETROVNA rises, crosses the stage, and quietly kneels before her. VERA tries to raise her, turns away, and hides her face.)

NATALYA PETROVNA (*speaks, still kneeling*): Vera, forgive me. Don't cry, Vera. I have done you wrong. I am to blame. Is it possible that you cannot forgive me?

VERA (*through her tears*): Please get up, please do!

NATALYA PETROVNA: I shall not get up, Vera, until you forgive me. It is hard for you . . . but consider . . . is it easier for me? . . . Consider, Vera! . . . You know everything. . . . Between us there is only this difference, that you have done me no wrong at all and I . . .

VERA (*bitterly*): Only that difference! No, Natalya Petrovna, between us there is another difference. . . . To-day you are so soft, so kind, so caressing. . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA (*interrupting her*): Because I feel my own guilt.

VERA: Really? Only for that reason?

NATALYA PETROVNA (*rising and sitting down beside her*): But what other reason can there be?

VERA: Natalya Petrovna, do not torture me any more. Do not question me.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*with a sigh*): Vera, I see that you cannot forgive me.

VERA: To-day you are so good and so soft because you feel that you are loved.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*confused*): Vera?

VERA (*turning towards her*): Well, isn't that the truth?

NATALYA PETROVNA (*sadly*): Believe me, both of us are equally unfortunate.

VERA: He loves you!

NATALYA PETROVNA: Vera, why should we desire to torture each other? It is time for both of us to come to our senses. Remember in what a position I am, in what a position we both are. Remember that our secret and the wrong that I have done you are already known to two persons here. . . . (*Stopping.*) Vera, instead of tormenting each other by suspicions and reproaches, would it not be better for both of us to think how to find a way out from this hard position . . . how to save ourselves! Do you think that I can bear these agitations, these anxieties? Have you forgotten who I am? But you are not listening to me.

VERA (*pensively gazing at the floor*): He loves you. . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA: He is going away, Vera.

VERA (*turning around*): Oh, let me alone! . . .

(NATALYA PETROVNA looks at her with indecision. At that moment the voice of ISLAYEV is heard in the study: "Natasha! Oh, Natasha! Where are you?")

NATALYA PETROVNA (*rising quickly and going to the door of the study*): I am here. What do you wish?

Voice of ISLAYEV: Come here, I want to tell you something.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Right away.

(She returns to VERA and extends her hand to her. VERA does not move. NATALYA PETROVNA sighs and goes out into the study.)

VERA (*alone, after a pause*): He loves her! . . . And I must remain in her house! . . . Oh, that is too much.

(She covers her face with her hands, and remains motionless. From the door leading into the hall peers the head of SHPIGELSKY. He cautiously looks around and comes up on tiptoe to VERA, who does not notice him.)

SHPIGELSKY (*after standing in front of her with arms folded and with a biting smile on his countenance*): Vera Alexandrovna! . . . Oh, Vera Alexandrovna!

VERA (*raising her head*): Who is that? Is it you, doctor?

SHPIGELSKY: Well, my young lady, are you not feeling well?

VERA: No, I'm all right.

SHPIGELSKY: Let me feel your pulse. (*Feels her pulse.*) Hm! Why so fast? Oh, my young lady, my young lady! . . . You are not listening to me. . . . But I think that I sincerely wish you happiness.

VERA (*looking at him with decision*): Ignaty Ilyich!

SHPIGELSKY (*quickly*): I am listening, Vera Alexandrovna. . . . What an expression there is on your face: good gracious! . . . I am listening.

VERA: That Mr. . . . Bolshintsov, your acquaintance—is he really a good man?

SHPIGELSKY: My friend Bolshintsov? A most excellent, a most honorable man . . . the mold and pattern of virtue!

VERA: He isn't bad-tempered?

SHPIGELSKY: The kindest sort of man. He isn't really a man, he is just soft dough. All you have to do is to take him and knead him. You couldn't find another man as kind as he in all the world, by daylight, with a candle. He's a dove and not a man.

VERA: Do you vouch for him?

SHPIGELSKY (*putting one hand on his heart and raising the other on high*): As I would for myself!

VERA: In that case, you may tell him . . . that I am ready to marry him.

SHPIGELSKY (*with joyous amazement*): Well, really?

VERA: Only, as quickly as possible—do you hear?—As quickly as possible.

SHPIGELSKY: To-morrow, if you wish. . . . By all means! Good for you, Vera Alexandrovna! Splendid girl! I'll gallop away for him right off, and won't I make him happy! . . . What an unexpected turn things have taken! He is fairly infatuated with you, Vera Alexandrovna.

VERA (*impatiently*): I am not inquiring of you about that, Ignaty Ilyich.

SHPIGELSKY: As you choose, Vera Alexandrovna, as you choose. Only you'll be happy with him; you'll thank me, you'll see. . . . (VERA again makes an impatient move.) Well, I am silent. I am silent. . . . So I may tell him?

VERA: You may, you may.

SHPIGELSKY: Very good. Then I'll set out right off. Good-by for a while. (*Listening.*) By the way, some one's coming in here. (*He goes into the study, and on the threshold makes a grimace of amazement for his own benefit.*) Good-by for the moment. (*He goes out.*)

VERA (*gazing after him*): Anything in the world rather than remain here! . . . (*She rises.*) Yes, I have decided. I will not remain in this house, not under any consideration. I can't endure her gentle look, her smiles; I can't see how her whole being seems refreshed, how she revels in her own happiness. . . . For she is happy, however she may pretend to be sad and melancholy. . . . Her caresses are more than I can stand. . . .

(BELYAYEV appears from the hall door. He looks around and goes up to VERA.)

BELYAYEV (*in a low voice*): Vera Alexandrovna, are you alone?

VERA (*looks around, shudders, and after a short pause utters the word*): Yes.

BELYAYEV: I am glad you are alone. . . . Otherwise I should not have come here. I have come to bid you farewell, Vera Alexandrovna.

VERA: Farewell?

BELYAYEV: Yes, I am going away.

VERA: You are going away? You, too, are going away?

BELYAYEV: Yes. . . . I, too. (*With intense internal agitation.*) You see, Vera Alexandrovna, it is impossible for me to remain here. My presence has already been the cause of many troubles here. Be-

sides the fact that, without myself knowing how, I have disturbed your peace of mind, and the peace of mind of Natalya Petrovna, I have also broken up old ties of friendship. Thanks to me, Mr. Rakitin is leaving here, and you have quarreled with your benefactress. . . . It is time to put a stop to all this. After my departure I hope that all will calm down again and return to its former quiet routine. . . . Turning the heads of rich ladies and young girls is not my line. . . . You will forget me, and perhaps in time you will be surprised how all this could have happened. . . . Even now it surprises me. . . . I do not wish to deceive you, Vera Alexandrovna: I am afraid, I am alarmed at the thought of staying here. . . . I cannot be responsible for anything. . . . You know I am not accustomed to such things as this. I feel embarrassed. . . . It seems to me that every one is looking at me. . . . And finally, it will be impossible for me . . . now . . . with both of you. . . .

VERA: Oh, don't be anxious about me! I shan't remain here long.

BELYAYEV: Why so?

VERA: That's my secret, but I shan't hinder you. You may be sure of that.

BELYAYEV: Well, then, you see, how can I help departing? Judge for yourself. I seem to have brought the plague into this house; every one is fleeing from here. . . . Is it not better for me alone to disappear while there is still time? I had a long conversation with Mr. Rakitin just now. . . . You can't imagine how much bitterness there was in his words. . . . And he was right in making fun of my new frock coat. . . . He was right. Yes, I must depart. Believe me, Vera Alexandrovna, I can hardly wait for the moment when I shall be rushing along the highway in a carriage. . . . I am suffocating here; I want fresh air. I am exhausted; I have a sense of bitterness, and at the same time, of relief, just like a man who is setting out on a long sea voyage. He is loth to part with his friends, he feels oppressed; and at the same time, the sea ripples so merrily, the wind blows so freshly in his face, that the blood involuntarily leaps in his veins, however heavy his heart may be. . . . Yes, I am going away without fail. I shall return to Moscow to my companions. I shall set to work.

VERA: So you love her, Alexey Nikolayevich. You love her, and yet you are going away.

BELYAYEV: Oh, don't, Vera Alexandrovna! Why do you say that? Do you not see that all is ended? It flashed up and went out like a spark. Let us part friends. It is time. I have come to myself. I wish you health and happiness. Sometime we shall see each other again. . . . I shall never forget you, Vera Alexandrovna. . . . I have

become very fond of you, believe me! . . . (*He presses her hand, and hastily adds.*) Give this note to Natalya Petrovna from me.

VERA (*looking at him in confusion*): A note?

BELYAYEV: Yes. . . . I cannot bid her farewell.

VERA: But are you going off right away?

BELYAYEV: Right away. . . . I have told no one about this . . . with the exception of Mikhaylo Alexandrovich. He approves my decision. From here I shall go immediately on foot to Petróvskoye. In Petróvskoye I shall wait for Mikhaylo Alexandrovich, and together we shall go to town. From town I shall write. They will send me my things. You see, everything has been arranged. . . . By the way, you may read that note. There are only two words in it.

VERA (*taking the note from him*): And are you really going away?

BELYAYEV: Yes, yes. . . . Give her this note and tell her— No, don't tell her anything. What's the use? (*Listening.*) They are coming here. Good-by. . . .

(*He rushes to the door, stops for a moment on the threshold, then runs out. VERA remains with the note in her hand. NATALYA PETROVNA comes in.*)

NATALYA PETROVNA (*going up to VERA*): Verochka! (*Looking at her and stopping.*) What is the matter with you? (*VERA silently extends the note to her.*) A note? From whom?

VERA (*in a hoarse voice*): Read it.

NATALYA PETROVNA: You alarm me. (*She reads the note to herself, suddenly presses both hands to her face, and falls into a chair.*)

(*A long pause.*)

VERA (*approaching her*): Natalya Petrovna!

NATALYA PETROVNA (*not removing her hands from her face*): He is going away! . . . He did not even wish to say good-by to me! . . . Oh, to you he at least said good-by!

VERA (*sadly*): He did not love me.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*removing her hands and rising*): But he has no right to go away in such fashion. . . . I wish . . . He can't do it. . . . Who permitted him to break off so stupidly? . . . This amounts to contempt. . . . I . . . How does he know that I should never have decided . . . ? (*She drops into a chair.*) My God, my God!

VERA: Natalya Petrovna, you yourself told me just now that he must leave. . . . Recollect!

NATALYA PETROVNA: You are happy now. . . . He is going away. . . . Now you and I are in the same position. . . . (*Her voice breaks.*)

VERA: You just said to me, Natalya Petrovna . . . These are your own words: "Instead of torturing each other, would it not be better

for both of us to think how to escape from this position, how to save ourselves?" . . . Now we are saved.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*turning away from her, almost with hatred*): Ah!

VERA: I understand you, Natalya Petrovna. . . . Do not be disturbed. . . . I shall not long hamper you by my presence. It is impossible for us to live together.

NATALYA PETROVNA (*starting to extend her hand to her, and dropping it on her knees*): Why do you say that, Verochka? . . . Is it possible that you, too, wish to leave me? Yes, you are right. We are saved now. All is ended. . . . Everything is again quite normal.

VERA (*coldly*): Don't be disturbed, Natalya Petrovna.

(VERA gazes at her sadly. ISLAYEV comes out of the study.)

ISLAYEV (*after looking for some time at NATALYA PETROVNA, in a low voice to VERA*): Does she know that he is going away?

VERA (*perplexed*): Yes. She knows.

ISLAYEV (*to himself*): But why is he leaving so soon? (*Aloud.*) Natasha! (*He takes her hand. She raises her head.*) It is I, Natasha. (*She strives to smile.*) You are not well, my darling? I should advise you to lie down . . . really.

NATALYA PETROVNA: I am perfectly well, Arkady. . . . This is nothing at all.

ISLAYEV: But you are pale. . . . Really, listen to me. . . . Take a bit of rest.

NATALYA PETROVNA: Oh, very well. (*She tries to rise, but cannot.*)

ISLAYEV (*helping her*): There, you see! (*She leans on his arm.*) Do you want me to see you to your room?

NATALYA PETROVNA: Oh, I am not yet so weak as that! Come on, Vera!

(*She goes towards the study. RAKITIN comes in from the hall. NATALYA PETROVNA stops.*)

RAKITIN: I have come, Natalya Petrovna—

ISLAYEV (*interrupting him*): Ah, Michel, come here! (*Leading him aside. In a low voice, with vexation.*) Why did you tell her everything right away? You know I asked you not to, I think! What was the use of hurrying? . . . I found her here in such agitation.

RAKITIN (*with amazement*): I don't understand you.

ISLAYEV: You have told Natasha that you are going away.

RAKITIN: Then you suppose that this was what caused her agitation?

ISLAYEV: Shh!— She is looking at us. (*Aloud.*) Aren't you going to your room, Natasha?

NATALYA PETROVNA: Yes. . . . I am going.

RAKITIN: Good-by, Natalya Petrovna!

(NATALYA PETROVNA takes hold of the door knob and makes no reply.)

ISLAYEV (*putting his hand on RAKITIN's shoulder*): Natasha does not know that this is one of the best men. . . .

NATALYA PETROVNA (*with a sudden burst of emotion*): Yes, I know he is a splendid man. All of you are splendid men . . . all of you . . . all of you . . . and yet—

(*She suddenly covers her face with her hands, pushes the door with her knee, and quickly goes out. VERA follows her. ISLAYEV sits down silently at the table and rests his head on his hands.*)

RAKITIN (*after looking at him for some time, shrugging his shoulders with a bitter smile: to himself*): What a position I am in! Splendid, I must say! Really, it is quite refreshing. And what a farewell after four years of love! It's fine, very fine; serves the chatterbox right. But, thank God, it's all for the best. It was time to stop these morbid, these feverish relations. (*Aloud to ISLAYEV.*) Well, Arkady, good-by!

ISLAYEV (*raising his head. He has tears in his eyes.*) Good-by, my friend—but this . . . isn't very easy. I didn't expect this, friend. It was like a thunderstorm on a clear day. Well, things will come out all right. And all the same, thank you, thank you! You are a true friend!

RAKITIN (*to himself*): This is too much. (*Abruptly.*) Good-by. (*He is about to go into the hall. SHPIGELSKY comes running in and meets him.*)

SHPIGELSKY: What's this? They told me that Natalya Petrovna was not feeling well.

ISLAYEV (*rising*): Who told you?

SHPIGELSKY: The girl . . . the chambermaid.

ISLAYEV: No, it's of no importance, doctor. I think you'd better not trouble Natasha now.

SHPIGELSKY: Very well! (*To RAKITIN.*) They say that you are going to town.

RAKITIN: Yes, on business.

SHPIGELSKY: Oh, on business!

(*At that moment there burst in together from the hall ANNA SEMENOVNA, LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA, KOLYA, and SCHAAF.*)

ANNA SEMENOVNA: What's this? What's all this? What's the matter with Natasha?

KOLYA: What's the matter with mamma? What's the matter with her?

ISLAYEV: Nothing is the matter with her. . . . I saw her a moment ago. What's the matter with you?

ANNA SEMENOVNA: But really, Arkasha, we've been told that Natasha was not feeling well.

ISLAYEV: And you were quite wrong in believing it.

ANNA SEMENOVNA: Why are you getting so excited, Arkasha? Our sympathy is perfectly natural.

ISLAYEV: Of course! . . . Of course!

RAKITIN: However, it is time for me to be going.

ANNA SEMENOVNA: Are you leaving?

RAKITIN: Yes, I am leaving.

ANNA SEMENOVNA (*to herself*): Ah! Well, now I understand.

KOLYA (*to ISLAYEV*): Papa.

ISLAYEV: What do you want?

KOLYA: Why has Alexey Nikolayevich gone off?

ISLAYEV: Gone off where?

KOLYA: I don't know. . . . He kissed me, put on his cap, and walked off. . . . And now it's the time for our Russian lesson.

ISLAYEV: Probably he will come back right away. . . . However, we can send for him.

RAKITIN (*in a low voice*): Don't send for him, Arkady; he won't come back.

(ANNA SEMENOVNA *tries to hear what is being said*. SHPIGELSKY *whispers with* LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA.)

ISLAYEV: What does this mean?

RAKITIN: He is leaving also.

ISLAYEV: Leaving? Where is he going?

RAKITIN: To Moscow.

ISLAYEV: What? To Moscow? Well, are all of you going crazy to-day?

RAKITIN (*in a still lower voice*): Between us two . . . Verochka fell in love with him. . . . Well, as an honorable man, he decided to withdraw. (ISLAYEV, *spreading out his hands, drops into a chair*.) Why . . . you understand now.

ISLAYEV: I? I don't understand anything. My head is in a whirl. This is all beyond anybody's understanding. Everybody is flying away helter-skelter, like partridges, and all because they are honorable men. . . . And all this, all of a sudden, on one and the same day.

ANNA SEMENOVNA (*coming up to him from one side*): But what's this? Mr. Belyayev, you say . . .

ISLAYEV (*shouting nervously*): That's all right, mother, that's all right! Mr. Schaaf, will you please take care of Kolya now instead of Mr. Belyayev. Will you kindly take him away!

SCHAAF: Very vell. (*Takes KOLYA by the hand*.)

KOLYA: But, papa—

ISLAYEV (*shouting*): Go away, go away! (SCHAAF *leads KOLYA away*.) I'll see you off, Rakitin. . . . I'll order my horse saddled, and I'll wait for you at the dam. . . . And you, mamma, for the present, for

God's sake, don't trouble Natasha—nor you either, doctor! . . . Matvey, Matvey! (*He goes out hastily.*)

(ANNA SEMENOVNA *sits down with an air of grief and dignity.* LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA *takes her stand behind her.* ANNA SEMENOVNA *raises her eyes to Heaven as if desirous of withdrawing from everything that is happening around her.*)

SHPIGELSKY (*stealthily and craftily to RAKITIN*): Well, Mikhaylo Alexandrovich, won't you permit me to take you to the highway with my new team of three?

RAKITIN: Ah! . . . Have you already got your horses?

SHPIGELSKY (*modestly*): I have had a talk with Vera Alexandrovna. . . . Then you will permit me?

RAKITIN: Very well! (*He bows to ANNA SEMENOVNA.*) Anna Semenovna, I have the honor. . . .

ANNA SEMENOVNA (*as majestically as ever, without rising*): Good-by, Mikhaylo Alexandrovich. . . . I wish you a happy journey.

RAKITIN: Thank you humbly. Good-by, Lizaveta Bogdanovna. (*He bows to her, and she curtsies in reply. He goes out into the hall.*)

SHPIGELSKY (*taking ANNA SEMENOVNA's hand in order to kiss it*): Good-by, madam.

ANNA SEMENOVNA (*with less majesty, but still sternly*): Ah, are you too going away, doctor?

SHPIGELSKY: Yes. . . . My patients, you know, need . . . And besides, you see, my presence is not required here. (*While bowing, he winks craftily to LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA, who answers him with a smile.*) Good-by. (*He runs out after RAKITIN.*)

(ANNA SEMENOVNA *lets him go out, and folding her arms, slowly turns to LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA.*)

ANNA SEMENOVNA: What do you think of all this, my dear? Eh?

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA (*sighing*): I really don't know what to tell you, Anna Semenovna.

ANNA SEMENOVNA: Have you heard? Belyayev also is leaving.

LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA (*sighing once more*): Oh, Anna Semenovna, perhaps I, too, shall not be staying here for very long. . . . I am going away too.

(ANNA SEMENOVNA *looks at her with inexpressible amazement.* LIZAVETA BOGDANOVNA *stands before her without raising her eyes.*)

THE
JOURNAL
OF
THE
AMERICAN
MEDICAL ASSOCIATION
PUBLISHED WEEKLY
CHICAGO, ILL., U.S.A.
Vol. 10, No. 1, January 1, 1917
Published by the American Medical Association, 535 North Dearborn Street, Chicago, Ill.
Subscription price, \$5.00 per annum in advance. Single copies, 15 cents.
Entered as Second-Class Matter, June 26, 1901, Post Office at Chicago, Ill., under No. 102,361.
Acceptance for mailing at special rate of postage provided for in Act of October 3, 1917, authorized on July 1, 1918.
Postage paid at Chicago, Ill.
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Printed at the Chicago Press, Chicago, Ill.

THE POOR BRIDE

A Comedy in Five Acts

By ALEXANDER NIKOLAYEVICH OSTROVSKY

(1852)

*Translated by John Laurence Seymour
and George Rapall Noyes*

CHARACTERS

- ANNA PETRÓVNA NEZABÚDKIN,* *widow of a poor official*
 MÁRYA ANDRÉYEVNA,† *her daughter*
 VLADÍMIR VASÍLYEVICH † MÉRICH } *young men, acquaintances of*
 IVÁN IVÁNOVICH † MILÁSHIN ‡ } *Madam Nezabudkin*
 PLATÓN MÁRKOVICH † DOBROTVÓRSKY,§ *an old lawyer*
 MÁXÍM DOROFÉYEVICH † BENEVOLÉNSKY, || *an official*
 ARÍNA EGÓROVNA HÓRKOV, *a widow of the citizen class*
 MIKHÁYLO IVÁNOVICH † HÓRKOV, *her son, a former student*
 KÁRPOVNA, *a matchmaker doing business among the merchants; wears*
 a kerchief
 PANKRÁTYEVNA, *a matchmaker doing business among the gentry; wears*
 a cap
 DÁRYA, *housemaid at the Nezabudkins'*
 A BOY, *in the service of Dobrotvorsky*
 DÚNYA } *young girls*
 PÁSHA }
 A butler, and various people appearing in the fifth act to watch the
 wedding

* Dontforget.

† In the dialogue usually: Andrevena, Vasilyich, Ivanych, Markych, Doroféich.

‡ Prettyman.

§ Benefactor (*sarcastic*).

|| Benevolent (*sarcastic*).

THE POOR BRIDE

ACT I

The stage represents a room; in the rear wall two doors, one leading into the interior, the other opening on the street. On the left, a window; near the window an embroidery frame; farther off, a piano; on the right a couch and a large round table.

SCENE I

MARYA ANDREYEVNA *sitting at the embroidery frame;*
ANNA PETROVNA *on the couch*

ANNA PETROVNA: There you are, we live the best we can. If your papa only hadn't spent his money without any sense, then things would be different; as it is, he left us with almost nothing. Things are all tangled up, and we have a lawsuit on top of it. Now they'll take away the house, and then what's to be done? You just think how we're going to live then!—And what can I do? I'm only a woman, and I don't know anything; for my part I'm used to depending on others. (*Silence.*) I wish you could get married pretty soon, Masha. It seems as if I shouldn't know how to thank God enough. But now, how can we get along without a man in the house!—It's impossible.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Come, mamma, you have only one thing to talk about.

ANNA PETROVNA: Why shouldn't I talk this way? Talking about it won't hurt you, will it? Come, come, I can't even say anything! What does this mean, really?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Is it my fault, mamma, that I don't care for anybody?

ANNA PETROVNA: Why shouldn't you care? I don't know. It's a crazy notion, that's what it is, Masha.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Crazy notion, indeed, mamma! Whoever wanted to marry me? Recollect a bit, what kind of people were they?

ANNA PETROVNA: What's to be done, Mashenka? What's to be done, my dear? Where can we find a handsome fellow for you? Nowadays the good suitors are always looking for money; they don't want to see what a pretty girl I have. Now where did I put my snuffbox, I declare

I don't know! Just take a look there on the stand— Wait, here it is in my pocket. It seems as if nobody would ever fall in love with you. The young men have nothing but wind in their heads. Yes, and it must be admitted, you're mighty fastidious. Just consider now: we haven't heaps of gold; there's nothing to be high-headed about!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: All right, all right!

ANNA PETROVNA: What's all right?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I'll think about it.

ANNA PETROVNA: Yes, but what are you going to think about; be so good as to tell me that. You'll keep on thinking about it until you get to be an old maid.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: And what's the harm in that?

ANNA PETROVNA: You're still a fool, that's what. (*She sits pouting. Silence.*) Good Heavens, if only Platon Markovich would come! I simply don't know what I'm going to do. There was a stocking here, and now where is it?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Here it is, mamma. (*She gives it to her.*)

ANNA PETROVNA (*knitting the stocking*): Platon Markych isn't coming, and that's all; so there, you do as you please.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: But why do you need Platon Markych, mamma?

ANNA PETROVNA: Why? What do we know, sitting here? But he, after all, is a man. The policeman has brought here some sort of a paper, and who's going to make it out? Great business for women, indeed! You look at it—and feel like a fool. Here I shan't get my money counted the whole morning. How're you going to do it without a man, indeed I don't know; here one trouble just leads to another. Take a piece of paper, Masha, and reckon up my money for me, if you please.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Keep on talking, and I'll count it.

ANNA PETROVNA: Wait, Masha. If you hurry me, I'll get off the track again. Where's that paper I had? Lord help me remember— Here it is! Wait, I've found it. Here, take it and count. I counted it up lately, counted it on the counting-board; either there was one ruble short, or there were two too many, but I thought it would be better not to make Darya do it. But things aren't all right in my head. That lawsuit of mine disturbs me a good deal; I must talk with Platon Markych about the house. After all, he's a man.

(DARYA comes in.)

SCENE II

The same and DARYA

DARYA: Mistress! Oh, mistress! a boy has come from Platon Markych.

ANNA PETROVNA: Call him in here.

(DARYA goes out. A boy comes in.)

BOY: Platon Markych presents his compliments; he sends yesterday's papers and a note, ma'am, and told me to inquire after your health.

ANNA PETROVNA: Oh, Lord, where did I hide my spectacles? Please take a look, Masha dear.

(MARYA ANDREYEVNA looks for the spectacles.)

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Just let me read it, mamma. I think you and Platon Markych haven't any secrets.

ANNA PETROVNA: Read it, Masha! Secrets, indeed! I asked him about the lawsuit. I acted like a woman; there, it was a shame to bother Platon Markych, an old man, but there was nothing else to do.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA (reads): "Most honorable, and very dear madam, Anna Petrovna. I have the honor to inform you that I have fulfilled all your commissions with exactitude and with pleasure, and beg you in the future to entrust all such to me. I send you herewith a report of yesterday's developments. In respect to that point concerning which you asked me, I went to the official place you indicated: there are no bachelor officials worthy of Marya Andreyevna; there is one person; but I doubt whether you'd like him because he's very large in build, indeed very much larger than the average, and pock-marked—" (She looks up beseechingly.) Mamma!

ANNA PETROVNA: Read ahead, read!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA (continues): "But from information obtained from my secretary and from his associates, he appears of good moral character, and no drinker, which, as I was informed, you desired especially. Should you bid me look about in other official places, I will execute this also with the greatest of pleasure. Your lawsuit, in consequence of neglect on your part, has taken a bad turn; however, my dear lady, do not be uneasy: for I have found a very competent man who can take charge of the said suit. Concerning the other matters, I shall have the honor of explaining to you in a personal interview. I remain, always ready to serve you, Platon Dobrotvorsky." What's this you're doing, mamma? You're sending Platon Markych about the official bureaus to hunt for suitors! God only knows what this means!—And you don't tell me a word about it! Why, it's actually insulting! Oh, mamma, what are you doing with me? (She sits down at the embroidery frame.)

ANNA PETROVNA: Absolutely no insult at all! You don't know anything about it, Masha; that's my business. I'm not forcing you, you see; you marry anybody you want. But it's my duty to find you a husband. (*To the boy.*) My compliments, my dear, to Platon Markych; tell him I thank him, and that I'm well, thank God!

BOY: Very well, ma'am.

ANNA PETROVNA: Come this way, I'll give you a note to Platon Markych. (*They go out.*)

SCENE III

MARYA ANDREYEVNA *alone*

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Every day it's the same talk! It's a wonder mamma never gets sick of it. Such a bore, such a bore that you don't know where to hide yourself! (*She embroiders on the frame. DARYA comes in.*)

SCENE IV

MARYA ANDREYEVNA *and* DARYA

DARYA: Oh, plague take you!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: What are you always cross about?

DARYA: Why, miss, how can I help being cross! Such people, you wouldn't believe it! I run out of the shop, and there some blockhead stops on the road and looks straight into my eyes. "Well," I said; "what are your peepers peeled for? What are you staring at? There's nothing written on me." He said: "How can I help looking at you, at such a beauty?" I spat at him, and went on. (*She looks for something.*) She loses it everlastingly, and I have to hunt for it. Oh, plague take—

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: What're you looking for there?

DARYA: The mistress lost her snuffbox—I've found it.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Say, Dasha, am I good-looking?

DARYA: Who, you? You're a killing beauty.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Let's change places, and they won't laugh at you.

DARYA: What good would beauty do me, my dear?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: But what good does it do me?

DARYA: What's this you're saying, miss! Just look, some young fellow will fall in love with you; it's a joy just to look at you. Why, some colonel or other will take you.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: How is he ever going to fall in love with me, Dasha? Mamma says that it's high time I was married.

DARYA: Really! And why not get married?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: And so what's the use of being a beauty?

DARYA: Why so? Your husband will love you all the more. Our neighbor here had two daughters: the older as thin as a match; the younger rosy and sleek, not yet sixteen years old, but just as if she had brought up three children. And so her mother says: "I'm afraid," she says, "to marry off the older, her husband won't love her; but this one here," she says, "he'll love." I've talked with you too long, miss; the old lady will be sure to get mad. (*She goes out.*)

SCENE V

MARYA ANDREYEVNA and later DARYA

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: It's easy for mamma to say, "Get married!" But whom shall I marry? I can't imagine without horror what it would be like to marry a man for whom you feel nothing but aversion. (*Reflecting.*) Any old monster thinks he has the right to woo, and even considers it a sort of favor, "because she," he says, "is a poor bride." One will simply bargain for me, as if I were a kind of merchandise. "I have property," he says; "you have nothing. I'll take your daughter for her beauty." (*She looks out of the window, reflecting.*) Merich! That's fine! He's going along so mournfully, lost in thought. I should like to know what he's thinking about; surely not about me. (*She approaches the mirror.*) Ah, how foolish I am! Now, why did I turn all red, and my voice tremble? I must calm down a bit—it may be he'll notice it. But what's this? I might even have wished him to notice it; what would he have done? Bah, what foolishness! Why am I lying? Darya, Darya! (*DARYA comes in.*) Go ask Vladimir Vasilyevich to come into the garden!

DARYA: All right, miss. (*She goes out.*)

MARYA ANDREYEVNA (*setting herself to rights before the mirror*): The various matchmakers will appear any minute; very pleasant to look at them! I'm used to seeing them, but I think it will seem very strange to him. How glad I am to see him—he comes to our house so rarely!

DARYA (*entering*): If you please, miss, he's in the garden. (*MARYA ANDREYEVNA goes out. DARYA begins to dust the furniture.*) What a young lady she is, really—God grant her a good suitor! (*She stops in the center of the room with the dustcloth in her hand.*) Now, just consider how the world goes: you're rich and all sorts of people esteem you; but if you're poor, they turn up their noses at you. So evidently it's not the man who's important, but his wealth. (*Spreading out her arms.*) Wonderful the way it's all done! (*She glances out of the win-*

dow.) Oh, plague take you! Now, who's here? (*She goes to the door, KARPOVNA comes in.*)

SCENE VI

DARYA and KARPOVNA

KARPOVNA: How are you, Dasha?

DARYA: How are you, Karpovna? I thought you were lost.

KARPOVNA: Well, my soul, I've been worked to death; I suppose there isn't anything new with you?

DARYA: Anything new, indeed! Where would it come from?

KARPOVNA (*sitting down*): How hot it is, my girl.

DARYA: My, you're getting stout, Lord help you!

KARPOVNA: Well, girlie, it does seem as if I were getting fat. Why don't you put on any flesh?

DARYA: You ask why I don't put on flesh? Well, how am I going to put on flesh? It would be a different thing if I lived in peace; as it is—bah!— (*She approaches her and speaks in a lowered voice.*) That is, you wouldn't believe it, Karpovna, day in and day out the mistress is just like a clock wound up; this thing isn't right, the other doesn't suit her; and she goes about grumbling and grumbling. I'm a hot-tempered woman; I won't stand being put upon, and then I have my say, and then there's the devil to pay—high words and a row. It amounts to this: if only I weren't used to this house from having lived in it seven years, I shouldn't stay here a day longer.

KARPOVNA: Shame on you, girlie! Ah! (*She shakes her head.*)

DARYA: I'm a hot-tempered woman; it boils inside, and boils, and suddenly it's like a mist before my eyes, and it's as if I'd be glad to wring somebody's neck. Only I get over my temper quick, in a moment it's as if nothing had happened; but she's always grumbling—so, you see, if it weren't that I'm used to it, living in it seven years—So I think: well— (*Waving her hand.*)

KARPOVNA: Nobody likes being out in service, my dear.

DARYA (*approaches nearer to her and speaks almost in a whisper*): The other day she says: "You're so and so! Why were you so long going to the store?" she says. "You're making friends with the shop-keepers!" "Why, mistress!" I say, "who saw me? No," I say, "don't you dare—I," I say, "am just a girl—in no respect—" Bah! it seems—well, it's better not to talk— (*After a brief silence.*) She's made life a burden to the young lady. "Get married!" she says.—"Whom shall I marry, mamma?" says the girl. Yes, and true enough: well, whom will she marry, what fool of a man? It would be better, Karpovna, if you found her a good suitor.

KARPOVNA: I've found one at last; but I don't know whether she'll like him.

DARYA: Here's what I think: you ought to find her an army officer. Just see what fine-looking ones go riding by. I think some one's coming. (*She goes to the door; PANKRATYEVNA comes in.*)

SCENE VII

The same and PANKRATYEVNA

PANKRATYEVNA: My dear, is the lady at home?

DARYA: She is.

PANKRATYEVNA: Say that Stepanida Pankratyevna has come. (*DARYA goes out. PANKRATYEVNA glances at KARPOVNA.*) Ba, ba, ba! —The crow has flown into the lofty palace! How did you get here?

KARPOVNA: On my own legs, that's how! Furthermore, what do you mean by showing yourself here with such a question?

PANKRATYEVNA: You keep turning up everywhere. You ought to stick to your merchants.

KARPOVNA: And you, I suppose, always associate with the gentry; the train of your dress is dirty with the dust of their hallways.

PANKRATYEVNA: Impudence! I don't care to talk to you.

KARPOVNA: Ha, ha, ha, ha!—You're extremely polite yourself, I suppose! Here you associate with the gentry, but you go around dowdy as the next one, so it's a shame to look at you; but I live among the merchants, and in my own house, no worse than anybody else's, and I've money in the bank. You've squeezed on your bonnet, and aha! you think, nobody could touch you!—But, if I want to, I can blow you sky-high. (*She laughs.*) I'll be of more account than you will!

PANKRATYEVNA: What's the use of talking with an impudent person! You know nothing of culture; that is, you're a fool, without any bringing-up!

KARPOVNA: Very well, a fool, but cleaner than you; nobody'll ever tread on my toes. (*Silence.*)

PANKRATYEVNA: But when Martyn Martyanich finds out why you go to see him, he'll take down your pride.

KARPOVNA: Why do I go? Well, say it, why do I?

PANKRATYEVNA: Well, everybody knows why.

KARPOVNA: Why shouldn't you know! You lie, you lie! Thirteen years I've been a widow, and have never done anything wrong. Because you've got a headache, you want everybody else to have one. (*ANNA PETROVNA comes in.*)

SCENE VIII

*The same and ANNA PETROVNA**(The matchmakers rise and bow.)*

ANNA PETROVNA: How do you do? Well, what's the news? Tell me quickly! *(Both are silent.)* Why don't you speak?

KARPOVNA: Let her talk first, she has the gentry.

ANNA PETROVNA: Well, you speak, Pankratyevna!

PANKRATYEVNA: I have two suitors, Anna Petrovna; such cavaliers that it's wonderful!

ANNA PETROVNA: What are they like?

PANKRATYEVNA: In the civil service, my dear, and nobles.

ANNA PETROVNA: Well, have they property?

PANKRATYEVNA: They're in the service, my dear, and earning their salaries.

ANNA PETROVNA: How do they behave?

PANKRATYEVNA: They behave all right. One writes verses, the other is always singing all day long. And such polite gentlemen and so amorous! Says one, "When I catch sight of a pretty girl, I'll get married at once, and shan't stop for anything."

ANNA PETROVNA: What rank have they?

PANKRATYEVNA: Not very high; but they're mighty good-looking.

KARPOVNA: Poor as Job's turkey, I can see that.

ANNA PETROVNA: Well, and what have you got, Karpovna?

KARPOVNA: I have such a dandy, I have; there's no comparing him to *her* suitors; and he has a nest egg laid away.

ANNA PETROVNA: Go along, Pankratyevna! Come in and see us one of these days.

PANKRATYEVNA: Good-by, Anna Petrovna. *(She goes out, with a furious glance at KARPOVNA.)*

ANNA PETROVNA: Ah, Karpovna, if only you could find us a suitor, I'd be so grateful to you—you know yourself. I'm only a woman, I don't know anything.— How're you going to get along without a man!

KARPOVNA: There now, my dear, there wasn't a penny, and suddenly there's a three-kopek piece. Such a dandy that you can't touch him!

ANNA PETROVNA: Who is he? Talk, don't torment me!

KARPOVNA: Sava Savich Belugin.

ANNA PETROVNA: What do you say! Why, he's a millionaire!

KARPOVNA: A millionaire, a millionaire.

ANNA PETROVNA: What gave him the idea?

KARPOVNA: Why, because, my dear, the children were too much for him. Now just consider what kind of children he has. There's no living

for him in the big house; you know—the one with the balcony. His sons shut themselves up there; and they drink, and raise all kinds of a row. And what did they think up: somebody jumps out onto the balcony, opens his eyes wide, raises his arms, cries out in a terrible voice—and back in he goes; then, after waiting a little, another comes out, and so they keep up their fooling. What's the use!

ANNA PETROVNA (*shaking her head*): A-a-ah, a-ah!

KARPOVNA: Well, consider yourself: the father watches and watches.

ANNA PETROVNA (*glancing out of the window and seeing MADAM HORKOV coming*): Well, all right, Karpovna, thank you. You know yourself, I'm only a woman—come in some day, we'll have a talk—now I haven't time.—Yonder Madam Horkov is coming.

KARPOVNA: I'll come back, I'll come. (*She bows and goes out; MADAM HORKOV comes in.*)

SCENE IX

ANNA PETROVNA and MADAM HORKOV

ANNA PETROVNA: Arina Egorovna! Please come in and sit down.

MADAM HORKOV: I've come only for a minute, Anna Petrovna, positively only for a minute. Imagine, I was in town.—“Well,” I think, “I'll just stop in at Anna Petrovna's; although she's pretty haughty and never calls on us, nevertheless,” I think, “I'll just stop in.”

ANNA PETROVNA: Pardon me, my dear; it's always business; by Heaven, I haven't any time. You know yourself I'm only a woman: I have to attend to everything myself. Now we're having a lawsuit about the house, and so I don't sleep nights. Well, if they take it away, where shall I go?—But I have a marriageable daughter.

MADAM HORKOV: I thank God for that, Anna Petrovna. You know my Misha, how humble, how respectful he is. “Mamma,” he says, “it's nothing to me that you're a simple and uneducated woman, while I,” he says, “am an educated man: I love and respect you.” Just think now, he's on the way to becoming a nobleman. The wife of our bailiff was saying to me the other day: “You have such a son, Arina Egorovna, that we,” she says, “all envy you: he's humble, respectful, and,” she says, “we never hear any complaints about him. Why,” she says, “don't you have him get married, Arina Egorovna?” But I thought to myself: “I know where you're aiming at.” She has, you see, three daughters, and she's giving a heap of money with them; only the girls, I say it myself, are without any sort of education; although I'm a woman without education myself, yet I can understand well what it is. I come home and say: “Misha, my dear, don't you want to get married?” I say. “I can't get rid of the rich marriageable girls; all of them, my

dear," I say, "are falling in love with you because of your gentleness and cultivation. I shan't interfere," I say, "with your own will, my dear: you yourself are wiser than I, and better educated; but when you have a mind to it," I say, "open your thoughts to me, and I'll find you a bride." Says he: "Mamma, although I'm an educated man, still I always prefer to talk things over with you." "Any girl," I say, "will be glad to marry you; I have," I say, "a prospective wife for you with wealth and beauty." Misha, just imagine, gave me a hug, and says to me: "Mamma dear, happiness isn't found in wealth; that's all corruption," he says. "Go," says he, "to Anna Petrovna: I esteem her; see what her opinion of me is. My heartfelt wish," says he, "is to please Marya Andreyevna."

ANNA PETROVNA: I humbly thank you, Arina Egorovna. I myself am very much pleased with your son. I've kept thinking I'd go in to see you, but I haven't any memory: I absolutely forget; how I do forget! You know my heartfelt wish is to see Mashenka married pretty soon; I'm using every means in order to find her a good man. To tell you the truth, from my youth I've been a spoiled woman: with my husband, now at rest, I lived as if behind a stone wall, I didn't meddle with business at all; but now, you see yourself, I fuss and fuss; it simply wears me out. How can one get along without a man in the house? Just consider. I'm a weak woman, inexperienced, absent-minded. If only I could get her off my hands, I'd be decidedly more at ease.

MADAM HORKOV: Think of that now, Anna Petrovna. You know my Misha on his good side; in society, considering his rank, he occupies a high position. I, of course, am a woman of humble position, but I have intelligence above my station; I hold myself aloof from that circle, and my feelings are rather aristocratic.

ANNA PETROVNA: I can't compel Mashenka. She's to have her own way. You tell Mikhaylo Ivanych to try to please Mashenka: I should be very glad.

MADAM HORKOV: That boy of mine is so bashful, he's afraid of everything. "It's strange, Misha," I say to him; "you're an educated man, and yet so bashful. My dear, what have you, with your mind and education, got to be afraid of? Any girl will gladly fall in love with you." And so pray permit me to give him some hope, Anna Petrovna.

ANNA PETROVNA: Tell him that, for my part, I'm willing: and I shall talk this over with Mashenka.

MADAM HORKOV: We humbly thank you; we shall hope. (*Silence.*) What a darling cap you have on; how much did the ribbons cost?

ANNA PETROVNA: Now don't you ask: you see, my memory is bad; seems to me it was eighty or maybe seventy kopeks.

MADAM HORKOV: A darling, a perfect darling!— Lend me the pattern of your blouse; I want to make one of black moire. Say, just imagine: I fairly dream of it, and it's always black moire.

ANNA PETROVNA: Now, where could I have put that? I'll have to ask Darya. Now, if Mashenka should get married I'd order one made for me for the wedding, on the Kuznetsky Bridge, a little fancier.

MADAM HORKOV: I don't advise you to, Anna Petrovna; I don't advise you. I know a dressmaker real well; she'll make you one simple and high-toned. I'm a woman of humble position, but I love to dress with taste, and to have everything high-toned. Misha keeps saying to me: "Mamma," says he, "one can't help being surprised at you; you have such good taste and judgment." Says he: "I love and respect you; it makes no difference to me," he says, "that you didn't receive any education." Good-by, Anna Petrovna; look up that pattern for me.

ANNA PETROVNA (*rising*): Let's go; it must be in my room; let's look for it together. (*They go to the door. MILASHIN comes in.*)

SCENE X

The same and MILASHIN

MILASHIN: How do you do, Anna Petrovna.

ANNA PETROVNA: How do you do, Ivan Ivanych. Mashenka must be walking in the garden. (*MILASHIN goes to the window.*)

MADAM HORKOV (*with a look at MILASHIN*): Who's that, Anna Petrovna?

ANNA PETROVNA: Milashin, Ivan Ivanych.

MADAM HORKOV: Well, he's no match for your daughter.

ANNA PETROVNA: I should say not! (*They go out.*)

SCENE XI

MILASHIN, alone by the window

MILASHIN: What's this! Merich here again! Well, so he is. I was expecting it. It's annoying, deuce take it! No, I shan't allow that. (*He walks about the room.*) For how long a time have I exerted all my efforts in order to please her; I nearly kill myself—and all for nothing; and then somebody or other—I positively cannot see how she can flirt with him. I wish I could get him out of here! Marry her? Well, she won't marry me because I haven't anything to live on; and besides, she evidently doesn't love me. But why do I keep on trying? I ought simply to go away, drop it, and pay no more attention to her.

But, on the other hand, I must make her feel what she's doing. I must say to her: "Marya Andreyevna, you now have new acquaintances, with whom you are happier than with the old; but you are losing a friend who was devoted to you." She, of course, will argue with me; but I'll say to her: "No, if it's better for you as it is, then all right; what's there for me to do here? Perhaps you're tired of me. Good-by," I'll say, "forever!" "But why forever, Ivan Ivanych?" "No," I'll say; "if I say good-by, it's forever; that's the kind of a fellow I am." I'll take my hat and go. Well, what then? Ah, deuce take it! She'll only be glad, if you please, that I'm gone, and Merich so much the more! No, sir, I'll stay, just to spite him; I'm going to come every day; I'm going to laugh at Merich to his face; somehow or other I'll get him out of here! I'm resolved to use every means! (*He walks about the room.* MARYA ANDREYEVNA and MERICH come in.)

SCENE XII

MILASHIN, MERICH, and MARYA ANDREYEVNA

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: How do you do, Ivan Ivanych! Well, have the matchmakers gone?

MILASHIN: It seems they have; I happened to meet two.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: What a bore it is! (*She stands musing.*) Come to see us oftener, Vladimir Vasilyevich. Promise!

MERICH: Dare I disobey when you command! Only I'll repeat to you, Marya Andreyevna, I'm afraid of you.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: That's enough joking! (*MILASHIN makes a very noticeable grimace.*)

MARYA ANDREYEVNA (*to MILASHIN*): What's the matter with you? Are you out of sorts to-day?

MILASHIN: Why, yes; my head aches a little.

MERICH: Your head aches. That's too bad. Take care of yourself. Good-by, Marya Andreyevna; kindly present my compliments to your mother.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: When are you coming again?

MERICH: To-morrow, if I may.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Of course you may! Make it to-morrow then. I'll expect you.

MERICH: Without fail. (*He goes out.* MARYA ANDREYEVNA goes up to the door.)

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Mind you keep your word!

MERICH (*behind the scenes*): Honor bright!

SCENE XIII

MARYA ANDREYEVNA and MILASHIN

MILASHIN: What was he talking about with you in the garden, Marya Andrevna?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Do you really want to know? You're very curious.

MILASHIN: Pardon me, Marya Andrevna, I didn't think that you and Merich had any special secrets. I didn't know—perhaps it was something of a sort that couldn't very well be told.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Perhaps.

MILASHIN (*after a brief silence*): Say, Marya Andrevna, why is it you don't like me?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Really, now, what's the matter with you? Why shouldn't I like you?

MILASHIN: Of course, I'm not so good-looking as Merich; I haven't been in society; I don't speak French. Nowadays those qualities are much valued. Be a grinning idiot if you want; only know how to flirt, and chatter—that's what pleases nowadays. It's blamed annoying!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: You're very amiable.

MILASHIN: Pardon me, Marya Andrevna, but I'm telling you the truth; I'm not to blame if that doesn't please you!—How am I any worse than this Merich fellow? If I took a notion to, I could be a hundred times better than he. A mere kid! He never had any real education; he only learned to jabber French in some boarding school or other. I at least finished my course in the gymnasium. How dare he laugh at me! He does nothing; he is just nominally in the service in order to receive the first rank. What if his father is rich; that's not of much importance!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: What harm's he doing you?

MILASHIN: Permit me, he's a most empty-headed fellow! (*Silence.*)

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Listen, Ivan Ivanych; are you in love with me? (*MILASHIN is confused.*) Poor fellow, I'm sorry for you! Forgive me!

MILASHIN: If you please, don't pity me! What's to be done? One can't force another's love. Make happy a man who is worthier than I.

DARYA (*comes in with the samovar*): My dear miss, Platon Markovich has come.

MILASHIN: At a fine time!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: And why not?

MILASHIN: Oh, because; I don't like him, somehow.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: It seems to me you don't like anybody.
(ANNA PETROVNA comes in with DOBROTVORSKY.)

SCENE XIV

The same, ANNA PETROVNA, and DOBROTVORSKY

DOBROTVORSKY: Well, madam, so the matter stands.

ANNA PETROVNA: I understand, I understand, Platon Markych.
(*She sits down by the table and pours the tea.*)

DOBROTVORSKY: How do you do, my dear young lady; how is it you aren't happy?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: What have I got to be happy about, Platon Markych?

DOBROTVORSKY: Yes, that's right. A bad crop of suitors to-day, young lady, a bad crop.

ANNA PETROVNA: Won't you have some tea?

DOBROTVORSKY: I'll have a cup, ma'am. There's nothing for marriageable girls to be happy about. Now, my dear young lady, I shall try to find out a good husband for you: you're going to thank me. I once knew your papa, now at rest: he was a benefactor to me. So don't you be uneasy now—I'll try. Your little hand, please.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: No, what for, Platon Markych?

DOBROTVORSKY: Why, nothing, ma'am; please! (*He kisses her hand.*)

ANNA PETROVNA: Move up, Platon Markych; come a little nearer.
(ANNA PETROVNA and DOBROTVORSKY sit down on one side of the table, MARYA ANDREYEVNA and MILASHIN on the other.)

DOBROTVORSKY: Certainly, madam. People nowadays, madam, I say, are all gone to seed; it's hard work looking up suitors. In our time, when we were young, it used to be that a boy was hardly feathered out when he entered the service, and then suddenly—he was married. Then, madam, Anna Petrovna, it was hard enough to find any bachelors; would you believe it, among us in the court, there wasn't one unmarried man. But now the young people live in such a way that one can only be astonished at them. This isn't decent.

ANNA PETROVNA: Decent, indeed! Of course it isn't! Oh, dear, I think I've forgotten the sugar. Masha, did I put sugar in Platon Markych's tea?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: You did, mamma.

DOBROTVORSKY: What is it you were pleased to say, madam?

ANNA PETROVNA: I say of course it isn't; it's all wrong.

DOBROTVORSKY: You're quite right, it's all wrong. In our time it

was utterly different. It was much pleasanter for the marriageable girls: they didn't have to sit around long. Suppose a girl had some physical defect, a hunchback, for instance; well, even that sort weren't scorned. Why, madam, my wife's sister had six fingers on her right hand; her mother kept groaning, because, she said, they'd never take the girl. . . .

ANNA PETROVNA: Tell me about it!

DOBROTVORSKY: A good man took her, and it came out all right. It's just as I say, madam, it was nicer for marriageable girls then; they didn't have to worry about anything.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Well, I don't worry in the least on that score.

DOBROTVORSKY: What do you mean, you don't worry about it, young lady? You say you don't, but how can you keep from it? Of course, it's a girl's business: they don't talk about it, it's as if they were ashamed of it; all the same they all think about it; how can they help it? Am I right, madam?

ANNA PETROVNA: Indeed you are, Platon Markych; that goes without saying. Have another little cup?

DOBROTVORSKY: Please. Now, my dear young lady, your mother says so, too. (*He speaks aside with ANNA PETROVNA.*)

MILASHIN: Blockhead!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: What're you calling him names for?

MILASHIN: He absolutely doesn't understand you! He thinks you're in a stew about suitors like that sister-in-law of his with six fingers.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Let him think what he pleases; he's a very good man.

MILASHIN: Still, what are they whispering about?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Something about their business matters.

DOBROTVORSKY (*in a subdued voice*): A handsome man, madam, and still young, very young. He's a secretary.

ANNA PETROVNA: A what?

DOBROTVORSKY (*louder*): A secretary, I say. His rank isn't high, but he has a good place. He has plenty of everything in his house, and his own horses.

ANNA PETROVNA: What? I don't hear.

DOBROTVORSKY: His own horses.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: What's that he's saying?

MILASHIN: Something interesting.

ANNA PETROVNA: Just listen, Mashenka; Platon Marykych has done us such a favor; he has found a man who is willing to take charge of our affairs. He says that he's a very nice young man.

DOBROTVORSKY: A handsome man, young lady; he knows so much law that it's a marvel.

ANNA PETROVNA: I'm afraid I forgot you, Ivan Ivanych. (*She pours him some tea.*) But he doesn't drink, Platon Markych?

DOBROTORSKY: Why shouldn't he drink? Yes, probably, a little: if he drank much, people would hear of it.

ANNA PETROVNA: There, Mashenka, it would be fine if he should like you.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: There you are, mamma; the same old story again.

ANNA PETROVNA: Good Lord, what does that matter? Why, you haven't seen him yet; take a look: it may be you'll like him yourself.

DOBROTORSKY: He and I'll come to see you, madam.

ANNA PETROVNA: Oh, Platon Markych, how grateful I am to you! Truly, I don't know how to express it to you. You see yourself that we're only women; what do we know? We just worry to death.

DOBROTORSKY: Why, madam, what's this you say? I was very much under obligation to your partner, now at rest—I shall remember it to my grave. He was a benefactor to me. Lord grant him the heavenly kingdom, the place of rest! How am I going to repay him? Well, I've grown old; my mind isn't equal to everything.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA (*rises*): Did you hear, Ivan Ivanych?

MILASHIN (*rises*): I did. That's awful!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: That's the everlasting topic of conversation here.

MILASHIN: I don't know. I can't come to myself. The mere thought that you, sometime or other, will belong to another, is killing me. It seems to me I can't bear it.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Always about yourself. You might think about me a little bit.

MILASHIN: About you, indeed! Look here: perhaps you'll like him. You'll be happy. Well, then! I'm ready even to sacrifice my life, in order that you may be happy.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: What on earth! That's enough: stop! Let's go into the garden. (*They go out.*)

DOBROTORSKY: So we'll come to-morrow, madam. We'll talk business, and he'll have a look at Marya Andrevna. It may be he'll like her. So we'll do two things at once.

ANNA PETROVNA: It would be very nice, Platon Markych, very nice. I never get that lawsuit out of my head: I actually can't sleep nights. Well, if they take away the house, where can I go? And it's high time to marry off Mashenka; truly, it's high time.

DOBROTORSKY: Why wait, my dear! It's the very time. I humbly thank you, madam! (*He inverts his cup.*) I'll bid you good-by.

ANNA PETROVNA: Good-by, Platon Markych; so we'll expect you.
DOBROTVORSKY: Very good, madam. (*He goes out.*)

ACT II

SCENE I

The stage represents a small, shady garden; to the right a bench, behind which is a large bush. HORKOV is sitting on the bench with bowed head.

HORKOV: I went away, I lost courage. What a wretched man I am! Still, what am I doing, after all? Why am I ruining myself? Here it is three years since I finished my course, and in these three years I have done absolutely nothing for myself. It gives me a cold shiver when I recall how I have spent these three years. Idleness, inactivity, a shameful bachelor's life: and no aspirations to get out of such a life, not a drop of ambition! All by myself I shall never decide upon anything; I know that. In her is my sole salvation, but I don't dare tell her that I love her. No, I must put an end to all this! She surely will have pity on me! For her I should work and toil; she alone can make me want to keep on living. (*He sits down.*) My God, how I love that girl, how I love her! (*MADAM HORKOV comes in.*)

SCENE II

HORKOV and MADAM HORKOV

MADAM HORKOV (*sitting down upon the bench*): Aren't you ashamed, Misha? Why did you go away? No sooner had I begun to express to Marya Andrevna how much you love her, and how you feel about her, when you suddenly ran off.— I'm an uncultured woman, yet I never get confused; while you get confused about everything.

HORKOV: Oh, mamma! Don't talk about me, if you please, with Marya Andrevna! I'll have a talk with her myself. As it is, you're always telling God knows what about me.

MADAM HORKOV: Yes, wait for you! It's strange, Misha, you, an educated man—

HORKOV: Yes, mamma, I'm educated: I have a good heart; besides that I know that she would be happy with me; that I alone can appreciate her; that she'll perish in that circle, a victim to calculation or ignorance— But I'm afraid that she'll refuse me.

MADAM HORKOV: Bah, good Heavens! The world is large enough for everybody! We'll find another.

HORKOV: Where shall I find another? It is well that chance threw me with Marya Andrevna; I became acquainted with her, fell in love.— Yes, believe me, I love Marya Andrevna so that I can see no one but her—I never thought that I could fall so much in love. I've tormented myself these last few days.— You see, I'm weeping—I can't live without her.

MADAM HORKOV: Well, if you love her, then declare yourself: that's the way they always do.

HORKOV: I'll have a talk with her; without fail I will. I must end it somehow.— But what if she refuse? Now, at least I have hope, I have dreams; but then what would there be?

MADAM HORKOV: It's strange, Misha: you're an educated man. But what are you actually *doing*? You have no sort of acquaintance; you're engaged in no business; you loiter about the house in a dressing-gown, with a pipe. Now you've fallen in love, but are afraid to say so. Just look how other educated young men live: the young ladies actually run after them.— Here, I think Marya Andrevna is coming this way.

HORKOV: Mamma! For God's sake, don't say a word!

MADAM HORKOV: Kindly don't teach me! Although I'm an uneducated woman, I know how to behave myself.

SCENE III

The same and MARYA ANDREYEVNA

MADAM HORKOV (*rising*): You've come out for a walk!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Yes, to refresh myself a bit. (*To HORKOV.*) What are you doing here?

HORKOV: Why, I'm day-dreaming—

MADAM HORKOV: The poor fellow is grieving.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: What about?

MADAM HORKOV: Must be he's in love: I notice it by his words.

HORKOV: Mamma!

MADAM HORKOV: Just look, how he suffers! Really, it hurts me even to look at him.

HORKOV: Mamma! Oh, good Heavens!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Really, I can't believe it. With whom is Mikhaylo Ivanovich in love?

MADAM HORKOV: You just ask him that yourself.— Misha! (*She gives him a sign, and goes out.*)

SCENE IV

HORKOV and MARYA ANDREYEVNA

MARYA ANDREYEVNA (*sitting down beside HORKOV*): What are you in the dumps for? Are you really in love?

HORKOV: Yes; I don't know what has happened to me.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: And I've just cried all the morning to-day.

HORKOV: What are you crying about?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Mamma keeps worrying me with suitors. Some old merchant; and to-day again an official is coming. How does that strike you?

HORKOV: That's terrible!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Yes; and for this reason, Mikhaylo Ivanych, I'm going to talk openly with you, because we're so friendly, you and I. Isn't that so? (*She holds out her hand to him.*)

HORKOV (*takes her hand*): Go ahead and talk.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I'm a little bit in love, myself.

HORKOV (*jumps up quickly*): You?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Don't be afraid; I'm not in love with you.

HORKOV (*sitting down*): No, ma'am; I was just—pardon me.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: How scared you were! Did you think it was with you? Never fear, never fear: I shan't disturb your sedateness. (*Silence.*) Here's the kind of situation I'm in, Mikhaylo Ivanych. What do you advise me?

HORKOV: I? I absolutely don't know.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Now I can't marry any one—a week ago I should have married, if a good man had turned up.

HORKOV: Really, no one?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Absolutely no one.

HORKOV: But what if I sought your favor? (*He forces a laugh.*) I ask you in fun.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I shouldn't marry even you. I'm a good friend of yours, but I can't love you.

HORKOV (*with increasing agitation*): But what if I loved you! What if I tried to please you! If I fulfilled with the utmost readiness your least wish! If I received with the deepest gratitude your every caress!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA (*glancing at him*): You're joking?— However, even if you should woo me, it would not be so difficult for me: I can tell you frankly that I don't love you, and you won't be offended; but others go and take offense.

HORKOV: Yes, yes, of course. (*Silence.*)

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Well, what sort of a man is—Merich?

HORKOV: Merich?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Yes, Vladimir Vasilyich.

HORKOV: I don't know what to say to you, Marya Andrevna; truly, I don't know.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: That is, you don't want to tell me. Very well, good-by; it's time for me to go to mamma. (*She goes out.*)

HORKOV: And I, blockhead, dreamed of happiness!— My God! My God!— (*He sits down, covering his face with his hands.* MILASHIN and MERICH come in.)

SCENE V

HORKOV, MILASHIN, and MERICH

MERICH: What's the celebration here to-day? Darya's so spruce and so dressed up that she don't want to look at you. She runs back and forth in starched petticoats.

MILASHIN: They're expecting guests.

MERICH: What sort of guests?

MILASHIN: A certain official is coming on Anna Petrovna's business. And they evidently mean him to be a suitor for Marya Andrevna. It's awfully annoying!

MERICH: Why don't you marry Marya Andrevna?

MILASHIN: I? For the very simplest reason. We'd have nothing to live on: I haven't any property, neither has she.

MERICH: But love? A cottage is Paradise with the man you love. It seems to me she loves you.

MILASHIN: It may be; yes, it may be! You haven't noticed anything, I suppose?

MERICH: No, I just said that, Ivan Ivanych: she doesn't love you.

MILASHIN: What makes you think so?

MERICH: I don't think so; I know it for a fact. She told me so herself.

MILASHIN: It's strange that Marya Andrevna should talk like that. It's just insulting. Of course, it's all the same to me whether she loves me or not, I don't pay any attention to that. For my part, I'm wholly indifferent to her. But why talk? By that she wants to show that I'm running after her. No, I'll just leave that to others.

MERICH: And good for you! I'd do the same thing in your place. Yet it's a shame if she's going to get married: she's such a beauty. I always feel sorry when pretty girls get married. Don't you?

MILASHIN: No, I don't.

MERICH: Sophie Barashkov also got married not long ago. Did you know her?

MILASHIN: No, I didn't.

MERICH: We were very much attached to each other. I might confess to you, Ivan Ivanych; of course you won't tell any one: she loved me very much. Here, see what sort of a letter she wrote me before the wedding. (*He takes it out.*) Do you want to read it?

MILASHIN: Why should I read other people's letters?

MERICH: As you please! (*Puts it away again.*) I hope you won't tell any one. Marya Andrevna surely must be inside; I'll go see her! (*He goes out.*)

SCENE VI

MILASHIN and HORKOV

HORKOV: Ivan Ivanych!

MILASHIN: Ah, you here! I didn't notice you.

HORKOV: Say, is that Merich here often?

MILASHIN: Formerly he was rarely here; but now he has begun coming again every day.

HORKOV: That's bad.

MILASHIN: But just imagine my situation: he comes every day, deuce knows what for!

HORKOV: But what is it to you?

MILASHIN: Well, anyhow, Mikhaylo Ivanych, it is terribly disagreeable to me.

HORKOV: It's not a question of you. He may have a very bad influence on Marya Andrevna. I've known him a long time. When he was still a boy, he used to write letters to himself, and brag to his companions in boarding school that he received them from young ladies. If you have any influence over Marya Andrevna, then put her on her guard: I shall feel very sorry if she believes that empty-headed man.

MILASHIN: All right, Mikhaylo Ivanych. I humbly thank you for opening my eyes in regard to that man. I'll tell her without fail.

HORKOV: But will she believe you?

MILASHIN: She will, assuredly she will: she loves me very much.

HORKOV: Hardly, Ivan Ivanych! It seems to me she doesn't love you at all.

MILASHIN: What makes you think so? Am I any worse than others? No, pardon me! You don't know me: women are always very fond of me.

HORKOV: Well, suppose it's so.— Only you must do it cleverly, so that Marya Andrevna won't think we're meddling out of jealousy. Shucks, I don't want to have anything to do with him; otherwise I'd drive him out of here at once.

MILASHIN: Do you want me to do it? I'll laugh at him to his face.

HORKOV: Nothing will come of that: Marya Andrevna will get angry at you, and that's all. However, what business is it of ours? Let them do as they please. (*Silence.*) A fancy fellow, that Merich! A leaf from his diary once fell accidentally into my possession, and a few letters that he had written to a woman, our neighbor—and she had given them to her husband.— And what wasn't there in them!

MILASHIN: Lend me those letters for a while.

HORKOV: What are they to you? Take them if you want to.

MILASHIN: I thank you kindly! (*He takes him by the hand.*) You've obliged me greatly.

HORKOV: But why do you thank me? I'm doing this for Marya Andrevna, not for your sake, because I love her very much, and feel a great sympathy for her.

MILASHIN: And I love her.

HORKOV: I believe it. Merich can do Marya Andrevna a great deal of harm. He's a man wholly without morals.

MILASHIN: And I'm terribly tired of him: he's trying to blacken me in the eyes of Marya Andrevna; he's interfering with me.

HORKOV: Let's go home, Ivan Ivanych; I guess we haven't anything to do here.

MILASHIN: No, I can't go; I have to stay here. Marya Andrevna will be sure to get angry if I go away.

HORKOV: Don't be uneasy, she won't get angry. She has no concern with you at present. To-day Anna Petrovna is expecting some official, whom she wishes to consult concerning her lawsuit. What is there for you to do here?

MILASHIN: As you please; let's go. (*They go out. From the other side MERICH and MARYA ANDREYEVNA come in.*)

SCENE VII

MARYA ANDREYEVNA and MERICH

MERICH: Good-by, Marya Andrevna.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Where're you going? I'll be lonesome by myself; sit here a while longer. (*They sit down.*)

MERICH: I heard from Milashin, Marya Andrevna, that they're seeking a husband for you.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Yes, Vladimir Vasilyich, they're on the look-out every minute; it's now one, now another.

MERICH: And you're going to get married?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I don't know. But what am I to do? I must get married.

MERICH: Well, for my part, I don't see the least necessity. Is anything compelling you?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: There are many reasons. You don't know our circumstances.

MERICH: Well, good Heavens! are they insurmountable?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Mamma says they are.

MERICH: That's terrible! To sacrifice yourself! What are you doing, Marya Andrevna! You were created to love and to be loved. Everybody must admire beauty. You really haven't the right to deprive us of that pleasure, and to give yourself away to one man forever.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: You're always joking!

MERICH: No, I'm not joking. Just consider, Marya Andrevna, what kind of a life that is! One moment of true love is worth more than the whole of such a life.— Now, in a matter of the heart, I shouldn't consult my mother. For your mother you want to ruin your own happiness and the happiness of others. What a child you are still!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Yes, if only that happiness were possible for me! As it is, I have nothing to regret, nothing to expect. No one loves me, nor do I love any one.

MERICH: You love no one?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: No one.

MERICH: And no one loves you?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I think not.

MERICH: In that case, it's another matter. But, all the same, it's awful to sacrifice oneself to the calculations of others.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: What's to be done! I shall pick out a man with some property who will also somewhat satisfy my demands.

MERICH: Whence comes such seriousness in you—such practical maxims?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Necessity teaches a person.

MERICH: If you're resolved, I don't want to shake your resolution: it does you honor. But on the other hand, what if you fell in love with some one, what if you chanced to meet a man who loved you ardently, with all the fire of youthful passion?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I don't know, Vladimir Vasilyich; but that will hardly happen.

MERICH (*in a melancholy tone*): Now when the matter is ended, when you have agreed to sacrifice yourself for your mother, which, of course, is admirable, I may tell you that I have loved you, Marya Andrevna, loved you passionately, still love you as no one else ever will.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: You're not deceiving me, Vladimir Vasilyich?

MERICH: Oh, no, no!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: You're not deceiving me?

MERICH: All the oaths I know—

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Never mind, never mind!— Ah, Vladimir Vasilyich! Don't deceive me for God's sake! You can do it so easily! I myself—love you. . . .

MERICH: My angel! I can't believe my happiness!— Why these tears? Marya Andrevna! Mashenka! Mary! (*He kisses her hand.*) Now, look at me! You're pretty! Ah, how pretty you are this very minute! I wish that all the world could see you now with those tears in your eyes!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I'm afraid I did wrongly to confess it to you.

MERICH: Why wrongly? You're conscientious because you have a heart, because you're above all those feelingless dolls who boast that they have never been in love. I can value your love.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I hope so. (*She falls upon his breast.*) Oh, don't look at me; truly, I'm so foolish; I thought I should have the firmness to hide my love!

MERICH: And why hide it?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Now, of course, there's no reason. On the contrary, now I should wish to open my soul to you suddenly, that you might know how much I love you.

MERICH: Why? As it is, you are dearer than anything on earth to me.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: No, Vladimir, no, you don't love me as I love you. You are everything to me now, everything, everything! Do you believe my words?

MERICH: Do you believe mine?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I don't know: I want to believe, yet I'm afraid— It would be pitiless in you to deceive me.

MERICH: Why these black thoughts? Just see, all nature smiles upon us. (*They sit for a while in silence.*)

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Oh, good Heavens, I had forgotten: a certain official wanted to come to see us to-day. Mamma's busy in the house, and told me to dress up pretty.

MERICH: I suppose he's a suitor?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I don't know. However, don't you be uneasy. I'll tell mamma I don't like him—I'll manage somehow.

MERICH: And it'll be soon?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I think so.

MERICH: Well, I'll go; good-by. (*They rise from the bench.*)

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Good-by. When will you come again? Come to-morrow morning: mamma won't be at home.

MERICH (*kisses her*): I'll come, I'll come. Good-by! (*He goes out.*)

SCENE VIII

MARYA ANDREYEVNA *alone, leaning against a tree*

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: He's gone! Did I do the right thing? I'm both ashamed and happy. What if it should be only fooling on his part? My God, how ashamed of myself I am! (*Silence.*) But if he really loves me? He was always so lonely and mournful. He says that up till now he has been constantly deceived in women. Ah, how I should like to know whether he loves me!—But I love him very much. What wouldn't I do for him!— Everything, everything, everything! (*She stands covering her face with her handkerchief. DARYA comes in.*)

SCENE IX

MARYA ANDREYEVNA and DARYA

DARYA: Oh, plague take you! I've run my legs off all day long!—Miss! Oh, miss! Where are you?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Ah! What?

DARYA: I'm looking, my dear; I'm tearing around like a cat in fits. Somebody's come; your mamma's asking for you.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: He's come! Oh, Lord!

DARYA: Let's go; I'll comb your hair; and you ought to put on another dress.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Let's go, let's go. (*She goes out.*)

SCENE X

Same room as in Act I

DOBROTVORSKY and BENEVOLENSKY *come in*

DOBROTVORSKY: If you please, Maxim Dorofeich, if you please! I must confess we didn't expect you so soon. You hurried, my friend, to favor us so early. Well, of course, it's about a woman's business. Just wait a few minutes.

BENEVOLENSKY: You said there was a pretty young lady here. You look out; I'm particular, you see.

DOBROTVORSKY: No, really now, Maxim Dorofeich! Such a young lady as a general wouldn't be ashamed to take. I used to be acquainted with her daddy—

BENEVOLENSKY: But is she well educated?

DOBROTVORSKY: Excellently educated.

BENEVOLENSKY: That's the idea. You know me, you see, Platon Markych; I have property, and a position; well, and acquaintances. I must have such a bride as I shan't be ashamed to show in society. Well, let her be the mistress of the household; you know, in a cap, like they wear nowadays, and let her receive whoever comes.— Well, and there must be a fashionable tone. Do you understand me?

DOBROTVORSKY: Why not! Of course, what's the necessity for your marrying a homely woman! You're a good-looking young buck yourself! Ah, you old rascal! (*He slaps him on the back and then bows.*)

BENEVOLENSKY: That's the idea. Is my shirt sticking out behind?

DOBROTVORSKY: No, sir, it's all right: it's quite correct. You might comb your hair a little, if you like: here's a comb.

BENEVOLENSKY (*takes it, and combs himself before the mirror*): Well, my boy, and so you say the young lady's good-looking?

DOBROTVORSKY: Just wait and see, Maxim Dorofeich. What's the use of talking beforehand: see for yourself.

BENEVOLENSKY: We'll take a look, my boy, we'll take a look. And will they give her to me, if I like her?

DOBROTVORSKY: Why, how can they help it? The old proverb, you know: "It's hard work trying, but there's no harm asking."

BENEVOLENSKY: All right, my boy, all right. (*He sits down.*) Platon Markych, you haven't seen my new carriage, have you?

DOBROTVORSKY: No sir, I haven't seen it.

BENEVOLENSKY: But have you seen my new black side-horse? Here, look! (*He points out of the window.*) Isn't he a beauty?

DOBROTVORSKY: Ah, Maxim Dorofeich, you rogue, you! You didn't buy it, I suppose.

BENEVOLENSKY: Of course not.

DOBROTVORSKY: Well, don't you look a gift horse in the mouth. (*Silence.*)

BENEVOLENSKY: Listen, Platon Markych, find me a mouth organ somewhere.

DOBROTVORSKY: Really, my friend! What do you want with it?

BENEVOLENSKY: To teach canaries.

DOBROTVORSKY: All right, I'll do it.

BENEVOLENSKY: Please. (*Draws out his snuffbox, and takes a pinch.*) Want some?

DOBROTVORSKY (*takes a pinch, then takes the snuffbox and weighs it, first in one hand, then in the other*): It's a pretty little thing! Where did you get it, please?

BENEVOLENSKY: Why, a good man happened to run my way un-

expectedly. Perhaps you remember, I had the case of the merchant Peresemkin with the young heirs of Akulina Nezamaykina, a merchant's niece; it reached the Senate, and was returned for inquiries.— (ANNA PETROVNA comes in.)

SCENE XI

The same and ANNA PETROVNA

BENEVOLENSKY: I have the honor to present myself, Collegiate Secretary Benevolensky.

ANNA PETROVNA: Very happy to meet you. Kindly be seated. Did you say you were in the service, sir?

BENEVOLENSKY: Why, madam, I've been serving since 1838. I can tell you that I am very well satisfied with my place and with my superiors. I'm a man devoted to the service, strict with my subordinates.

ANNA PETROVNA: Have you any relatives here in Moscow?

BENEVOLENSKY: No, absolutely not a soul, ma'am.

ANNA PETROVNA: I think that you— (to DOBROTVORSKY.) What did you say the name was, Platon Markych? I keep forgetting!

DOBROTVORSKY: Maxim Dorofeich.

ANNA PETROVNA: I simply haven't any memory, Maxim Dorofeich! Well, what are you going to do, really? I suppose you must be lonesome, Maxim Dorofeich. I judge by myself; it's a woman's way, you know.— While my departed husband was living, it was all so-so: well, all my acquaintance was excellent; but now, I simply don't know what to do.

BENEVOLENSKY: I agree with you, madam.

ANNA PETROVNA: Now there's a lawsuit. How am I going to see that through without a man, if you please? I may lose it.

BENEVOLENSKY: But kindly inform me, what is your suit about?

ANNA PETROVNA: I really can't remember all of it; I'll just muddle it up; but Platon Markych here will tell you.

DOBROTVORSKY: Look into it, Maxim Dorofeich, my friend, look into it!

BENEVOLENSKY: All right, I'll take a look. If it's possible to do anything at all, madam, we'll do it; if it's impossible, don't take it ill: that's my way of doing business. Of course, whoever isn't a sinner before God, isn't guilty before the tsar; but they're very strict on that account these days, I'm telling you.

DOBROTVORSKY: Extremely strict, my dear lady. What he says is true. They've become very strict. That's just it.

ANNA PETROVNA: Do tell!

BENEVOLENSKY: Nowadays just keep your ears open. I'll tell you about my own case: I'm in continual fear. It's impossible that there shouldn't be some peccadillos; at any moment they'll bring you to trial, drive you from the service, and where'll you go? Well, all right: I'm a bachelor; but here's a married man—

ANNA PETROVNA: But don't you intend to provide yourself with a family?

BENEVOLENSKY: That question, madam, is of great importance in life, especially in mine. I have property, plenty of everything at home. I keep my own horses! You ought to see what kind of lodgings I occupy; Platon Markych here has seen them. You've seen my lodgings, Platon Markych?

DOBROTVORSKY: Indeed I have: excellent lodgings.

BENEVOLENSKY: Consequently, what should I look for, I ask you?

ANNA PETROVNA: A companion for life, Maxim Dorofeich; that's what I think.

BENEVOLENSKY: I agree with you, madam. But, so far as I know, every wife, whatever she's like, is a life-companion. I must seek preferably a housewife. My business is to make money with all my might, her business is to manage the household. There's no system in my house; you see they steal from a bachelor. Anything may happen.

ANNA PETROVNA: And no wonder, Maxim Dorofeich.

DOBROTVORSKY: Quite so, it's easy for things to go wrong.

BENEVOLENSKY: I should wish that she might be good-looking and educated, so that I shouldn't be ashamed to show her in society, or go riding anywhere. Although my acquaintance isn't very high-toned, consisting mostly of petty officials; yet, all the same, don't you know, I'll tell you openly, it's nice to have a pretty and educated wife. But the chief thing is, I need a housewife.

ANNA PETROVNA: You reason justly, Maxim Dorofeich; but maybe you desire also a large dowry?

BENEVOLENSKY: I? No, ma'am, I'm not looking for that. They won't give me a girl with property, because of the insignificance of my origin, and I might say, of my position in society. Still there are marriageable girls of noble birth and of education, but poor; and for them, I tell you without pride, such a man as I is a find.

ANNA PETROVNA: I agree with you, Maxim Dorofeich.

BENEVOLENSKY: Of course, I can't boast of any good looks. I also received an education, which, to put it in a simple, popular expression, don't cut much ice. But I've seen people; I don't get confused in society; and I may say that I'm much at ease even with the ladies. Now I ask you: what are good looks worth in a man? It's the last consideration.

ANNA PETROVNA: It's simple foolishness, Maxim Dorofeich—why, it's freakish.

BENEVOLENSKY: A wise girl doesn't pay any attention to good looks; it's enough for her if her husband has sense; well, and—dresses properly—

ANNA PETROVNA: Doesn't drink—

BENEVOLENSKY: Of course—but do you know, madam, I venture to remark that in a man even that is all right. What do you think about that, Platon Markych?

DOBROTVORSKY: It's all right, madam, Anna Petrovna; that doesn't hurt a man. He might be a good fellow.

ANNA PETROVNA: How's that, Platon Markych? If it's just once in a while, otherwise—

BENEVOLENSKY: In a woman it's a vice, I agree with you. But for a man it is sometimes a pressing need. Especially if he is a man of affairs: he must have some distraction. Of course, I myself should be the first to condemn those who have a strong passion for it. (*Silence.*) Such, madam, is the opinion I have on marriage. However, I have no need of hurrying; I can choose a wife quite in accordance with my wishes.

DOBROTVORSKY: Why should you hurry; you don't have to!
(*MARYA ANDREYEVNA comes in.*)

SCENE XII

The same and MARYA ANDREYEVNA

ANNA PETROVNA: My daughter Mashenka! Maxim Dorofeich Benevolensky!

BENEVOLENSKY: Very happy to make your acquaintance. (*Approaches to kiss her hand, then sits down beside her in a free and easy fashion.*) You're very fond of music, I hear?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Sometimes I play when I'm bored.

ANNA PETROVNA: No indeed, nothing of the kind! She's always sitting at the piano, you can't drive her away. Come now, Masha, what is it you play so often? I keep forgetting.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Really, I don't know: I play a lot of things.

ANNA PETROVNA: No, what was it that you were playing to-day?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: From *Robert the Devil*, "Grace."

ANNA PETROVNA: Yes, yes. (*Softly.*) Be less stiff!

BENEVOLENSKY: Imagine, I have never seen that opera; they say the music is very good. Once we got up a party, but the plan fell through.

ANNA PETROVNA: How was that?

BENEVOLENSKY: Very simple. Directly from the office we went to a chophouse for dinner, so we could go from there to the theatre. Well, we were young folks, we forgot about the theatre; and so we passed the evening in the chophouse.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA (*softly*): This is terrible!

BENEVOLENSKY: I also love music myself; but, unfortunately, I don't play a single instrument. Indeed, for a man of affairs it isn't necessary. I used to play the guitar, but I gave it up: I hadn't the time, absolutely hadn't the time.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA (*aside*): Oh, Lord!

BENEVOLENSKY: Maybe you're studying literature? Young ladies usually read novels; even in boarding school they begin to read on the quiet, away from the inspectress.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Yes, I read a little. And you?

BENEVOLENSKY: I've stopped entirely. I used to read; but now, you know, there's business; and so I read absolutely nothing.

ANNA PETROVNA: The very idea, Mashenka! When is Maxim Dorofeich going to read? He has plenty to do without that, without all that foolishness.

BENEVOLENSKY: What are they writing nowadays? Tell me.

ANNA PETROVNA: Heaven knows what they're writing! Such stuff as never happened: just freakish things.

DOBROTVORSKY: Exactly, madam, freakish. All hallucinations.

BENEVOLENSKY: Probably they write mostly about love?

ANNA PETROVNA: Love indeed! All foolishness: there was never anything like it. Wouldn't you like some tea, Maxim Dorofeich?

BENEVOLENSKY: No, ma'am, I humbly thank you. I'm positively no lover of it.

DOBROTVORSKY: What's the good of tea, madam? We're not the tea-drinking kind of guests. If you'd just have some relish brought in, then Maxim Dorofeich and I'd have a little glass to go with it!

ANNA PETROVNA: Right away, my dear, right away. Excuse me, I'll leave you for a minute. (*She goes out.*)

SCENE XIII

The same, without ANNA PETROVNA

BENEVOLENSKY: That wasn't a bad idea of yours, Platon Markych. (*He takes out his watch. To MARYA ANDREYEVNA.*) I usually drink vodka at this time, I've made a habit of it.

DOBROTVORSKY: He, he, he! What do you mean by tea? Are we a couple of little kids, eh?

BENEVOLENSKY: Your mamma reasons about love like an old man. I didn't want to contradict her because I have a proper respect for age. But I have an exactly opposite opinion of love. I myself have a tender heart, susceptible to love; only I have a great deal of business: you wouldn't believe it, but I have no time to think about those things. (*He looks tenderly at her.*) What kind of candy do you like?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I don't like any.

BENEVOLENSKY: It can't be: you're deceiving me. You want me to guess your taste. Just let me bring you some next time. Platon Markych, what kind of candy does Marya Andrevna like? She won't say.

DOBROTVORSKY: I don't know; you'll have to ask her mother.

BENEVOLENSKY: All right, we'll ask.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: If you please, don't trouble; I don't want any kind of candy.

BENEVOLENSKY: Well, just as you please; all the same, I'll bring some. Let me ask you to play something.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Really, I don't play anything.

BENEVOLENSKY: Do me the favor. I'm going to beg you on my knees.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Indeed, why should you? All right then. (*She seats herself at the piano, strikes a few chords, and begins to play. ANNA PETROVNA comes in; after her DARYA brings in the relish, places it on the table, and goes out.*)

SCENE XIV

The same and ANNA PETROVNA

ANNA PETROVNA: Won't you have something, Maxim Dorofeich? Without ceremony, if you please.

BENEVOLENSKY: Don't go to any trouble.

DOBROTVORSKY: Up to you to begin. (*He pours a glass of liquor.*) If you please.

BENEVOLENSKY (*drinks, then takes a bite, and before he has finished swallowing, goes up to the piano and begins to sing with the music. MARYA ANDREYEVNA turns around and glances at him questioningly*): I didn't get the pitch—please continue.

ANNA PETROVNA: Play, Mashenka.

DOBROTVORSKY: Marya Andrevna plays excellently.

BENEVOLENSKY: Very nimbly. I had a friend who was the prince of singers; and he could play anything you please on the piano; was self-taught, and played by ear. Only he had no nimbleness in his

fingers. He could play anything you want, but he hadn't any nimbleness!

DOBROTVORSKY: Hadn't you better repeat, Maxim Dorofeich? How does that saying go: Repetition—

BENEVOLENSKY: *Est mater studiorum.* Yes, that's right. Pour me another.

DOBROTVORSKY (*pouring*): Here you are; it's ready.

BENEVOLENSKY (*drinks and takes a bite*): Beautiful sturgeon.

ANNA PETROVNA: I don't know, Maxim Dorofeich; if the grocer didn't deceive me, it's good. I have to attend to everything myself. I'm only a woman, you know; it's easy to fool me. In such a matter it's impossible to get along without a man. How are you going to get along without a man: consider yourself!

DOBROTVORSKY (*leads BENEVOLENSKY aside and speaks to him softly*): Well, Maxim Dorofeich, my friend, how does our young lady strike you?

BENEVOLENSKY: You listen, Platon Markych, here's all I've got to say to you: I'm in love. I'm a man of affairs—you know me, I don't like to bother with trifles; but I tell you, I'm in love. I think that's enough. (*He goes up to MARYA ANDREYEVNA and again sings with the music.*)

ANNA PETROVNA (*to DOBROTVORSKY*): What was he saying to you?

DOBROTVORSKY: He said he was in love.

ANNA PETROVNA: What?

DOBROTVORSKY: In love, he says.

ANNA PETROVNA: Well, thank God. Fill him up full, my dear.

DOBROTVORSKY: All right, madam, all right. Maxim Dorofeich, won't you have a little wine?

BENEVOLENSKY: Pour away.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA (*stops playing but remains seated at the piano*): I'm tired.

BENEVOLENSKY: I'm heartily grateful to you. You play beautifully; the chief thing is you never get rattled; young ladies usually get rattled. (*He looks at his watch.*) Excuse me, Anna Petrovna, it's time for me to go; I have a lot of business: you see, I'm a man of affairs. Permit me to drink a glass of wine and bid you good-by. (*He goes up to the table and drinks.*) Are you going with me, Platon Markych?

DOBROTVORSKY: I am, Maxim Dorofeich.

BENEVOLENSKY: Well, let's go: I'll see you home.

ANNA PETROVNA: You might take a bite of something, Maxim Dorofeich.

BENEVOLENSKY: No, ma'am, I thank you kindly. I'll just take another glass of wine, and do myself the honor to wish you good

evening. (*He drinks and bows; goes up to MARYA ANDREYEVNA and kisses her hand.*) Until I see you again! Surely you'll let me come once more to visit you.

ANNA PETROVNA: Do us the favor, we'll be very glad.

BENEVOLENSKY: And I'll bring some candy, I certainly will. (*He goes out with DOBROTVORSKY.*)

ANNA PETROVNA: What a man, Mashenka! He's simply splendid!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Lord, what torture this is! (*She runs out.*)

ANNA PETROVNA: Mashenka! Mashenka! Where're you going? Wait! Well, now I've got to go talk it over with her. What a punishment!

ACT III

Same room as in Act I

SCENE I

ANNA PETROVNA *comes in wearing a cape, and with a large reticule; after her, MARYA ANDREYEVNA.*

ANNA PETROVNA (*sits down on a chair beside the door*): Now if I don't forget anything! First, to town—did you write down everything that I have to buy?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Yes, mamma.

ANNA PETROVNA: Now, where's the list? Wait! Yes, in my reticule. All right, to town first; then stop at the court, to inquire about the suit. Wasn't there something else?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: No, nothing. Hurry along, mamma, or you'll be late!

ANNA PETROVNA: Good-by, God be with you! (*She goes out, then returns.*) Tell Darya not to receive anybody while I'm gone, especially young men: you're a marriageable girl now, suitors will be coming after you. Before you know it, some talk will come of it.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: All right, mamma, all right. Hurry along!

ANNA PETROVNA: Well, good-by! I'll be back soon. (*She goes out.*)

SCENE II

MARYA ANDREYEVNA alone

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: She's gone at last. I began to be afraid that Vladimir would come while she was here.— Does Vladimir know with what impatience I await him? (*She sits down in an armchair.*) I have only just now found out what bliss it is to love and to be loved!

Why is it he doesn't come? I'm tortured with impatience. But did I do right in telling him to come to-day? We shall be alone. (*Silence.*) If it were possible to know the future, how I should like to know how our love will end. However, what is it to me how it will end? I'm happy now: I love him, he loves me; and then, come what will! Some one's coming. Can it be he? (*She runs to the door. MILASHIN comes in.*)

SCENE III

MARYA ANDREYEVNA and MILASHIN

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Why did you come?

MILASHIN: What do you mean, why? I came to see you.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Mamma's not at home; she said to receive no one while she was gone.

MILASHIN: Stop your joking!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I'm positively not joking! Truly, mamma said to allow no one in.

MILASHIN: Well, I don't care about your mother.— But, maybe you yourself don't want me to stay here.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Well, what if I don't?

MILASHIN: In that case, I'll go away.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Well, good-by!

MILASHIN: Good-by! Only permit me at least to know why you're driving me away?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Ah, good Heavens! Well, just because; mere caprice. Don't you want to execute a single one of my requests?

MILASHIN: How should I dare not to!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Then go along!

MILASHIN: I'm going. Why are you uneasy?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: But you don't budge.

MILASHIN: Really, this is strange: suddenly, for no reason at all, you drive me away; you won't even say why. That's a shame, you know!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Well, stay if you please; I'll go into my room and you can sit here alone. (*Silence.*) So you aren't going?

MILASHIN: I'm going.— Why, I came to you on business to-day. (*MARYA ANDREYEVNA sits turned toward the window.*) You're not listening to me, yet this matter concerns you.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: What on earth is it?

MILASHIN: I wanted to open your eyes regarding a certain man.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: That is, you came to gossip. If so, you can do it another time, when you have more leisure.

MILASHIN: No, not to gossip; I only wanted to warn you.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Another time, Ivan Ivanych, if you please—another time! Come again.

MILASHIN: See here, Marya Andrevna, only ten words. I have found out some very good things about a certain man.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA (*aside*): What a punishment! (*To MILASHIN.*) About whom?

MILASHIN: About Merich.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Don't tell me, if you please: I know all about it. (*Aside.*) Scoundrel! He's made up something about him!

MILASHIN: And it's a good thing that you do know; that's all I desired. What a man! How he puts it on!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Yes, yes, an awful man!

MILASHIN: Not awful, simply ridiculous! A kid! One has to laugh at all his nonsense.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Well, yes, ridiculous! Ivan Ivanych, do you love me?

MILASHIN: I love you, Marya Andrevna; by Heaven, I do!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Do me one favor.

MILASHIN: Anything you desire; I'm ready to sacrifice my life for you.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: It must be only in words! I've been begging you for a whole hour to go away, and you don't budge.

MILASHIN: Right away, right away! (*He takes his hat.*) Good-by! (*He moves away, and then returns.*) Marya Andreyevna! I beseech you, say why you want to be left alone?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Ivan Ivanych, we shall quarrel!

MILASHIN: My fault, my fault! (*He remains standing a short time.*) Just let me kiss your hand good-by!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: With pleasure! (*MILASHIN kisses her hand, then goes out.*)

SCENE IV

MARYA ANDREYEVNA alone

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: At last he's gone! Poor Vladimir! That any Milashin should dare to tell stories about *him*, and to discuss *his* actions! It's awful! He, poor fellow, finds no sympathy anywhere. That's because he's above everybody else; it's stifling for him in this society; they all envy him. I love him so much this very minute that I believe I could sacrifice everything for him. (*She muses.*) However, why doesn't he come? (*She sits down by the window and watches.*) I think that's he! I'll throw myself on his neck at once, heedless of

everything! (*She walks away into the middle of the room. MERICH comes in. She approaches him timidly.*)

SCENE V

MARYA ANDREYEVNA and MERICH

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: How happy I am! How I've longed to see you, Vladimir!

MERICH: Are we alone?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Yes. (*MERICH kisses her.*) Ah, how much I have thought and felt since yesterday! You wouldn't believe it! I want to talk it all over with you as soon as possible; I'm afraid I'll forget.

MERICH: What is it you've thought about?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Maybe you'll laugh; all right, laugh! Let's go sit down by the window, where we can see when mamma's coming.

MERICH: Won't you give me one more little kiss?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Ten if you want; only let's talk over my situation a little bit.

MERICH: Well, let's do. What are you going to tell me?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I want to tell you many, many things. When we saw each other last evening the time was so short; I thought about you so much all last night, this forenoon—but now I'm so agitated: it seems to me I've forgotten everything.

MERICH: Well, it's a good thing you have.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Imagine, Vladimir! There suddenly appeared yesterday a sort of monster who talked about music, about literature, and wanted to bring me candy. What a fix I was in! Most revolting creature! Mamma's angling for him.— But you aren't listening to me!—

MERICH: I'm looking into your little eyes. How pretty those eyes of yours are! So that one wants to kiss them. I remember some other little eyes like them.— She died—poor woman! Well, but why talk about the past? We'll profit by the present. Ah, Mary, I've lived through a great deal—I'm afraid lest it take away my power to respond to your childish love. Mary, if I had only met you about two years ago!—

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: You just listen, for Heaven's sake!

MERICH: All right, all right. I'm listening.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: That Benevolensky came. He's vulgar, uneducated, simply awful!

MERICH: Mary! Come, that's a dry matter! Why should we waste our precious time on such trifles?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: What am I going to do with that Benevolensky? I'm simply afraid of him.

MERICH: As if that were worth thinking about! What business have you with that Benevolensky?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: But mamma? How'll I get along with mamma? Ah, Vladimir, there's a good deal you don't know; and you won't listen.

MERICH: What should I know! I know only one thing: that you love me. And if you love me, then you won't marry Benevolensky.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: But, all the same, I'm in a very awkward situation. Advise me what I should do. (MERICH *kisses her on the shoulder.*) Ah, Vladimir, if you knew how hard it is for me—and all you do is kiss me!

MERICH: Oh, my God, Mary, I love you! I'm happy in the fact that I found you alone; but you talk to me about your mother, and some suitors or other. But what have I got to do with them? (*Again he kisses her shoulder.*)

MARYA ANDREYEVNA (*turning away from him*): It looks as if you didn't have any interest in me, since you won't enter into my situation. Confound you!

MERICH: You're angry!— And this is love!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: And is this love that you won't listen to me? (*She weeps.*)

MERICH: What, tears! So soon! (*Sits down on a chair.*) However, that's what I thought! This is the usual story! Here's your love for you! At first an avowal, passion, and then—either papa or mamma, or some suitor or other comes in. (*Silence.*)

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Vladimir! Are you angry?

MERICH: No, I'm used to this. Aren't you sorry for me, Mary? I've suffered all my life; but you won't afford me a single moment of unembittered happiness.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Don't be angry, Vladimir.— Let's make up. (*She kisses him.*) Is that enough for you?

MERICH: No indeed. (MARYA ANDREYEVNA *kisses him several times more.*) Harder, Mary, harder! Now I see that you're a clever girl. Ah, Mary, I remember one woman: that was love!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Why do you say that to me? Do you think I like to hear that?

MERICH: What's this! Jealousy! Why, are you jealous? I'm very fond of teasing jealous women.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: No, that's not jealousy; but it's insulting to

me that you should talk about other women at the same time that I'm caressing you. You're going to go and tell about me also. . . .

MERICH: What do you take me for? No, Mary, never again shall I love any one but you. Kiss me, Mary!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Enough, Vladimir, enough. We'd better talk about something.

MERICH (*sits down beside her and embraces her*): What about, what about?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA (*quickly glancing out of the window*): Oh, mamma!—

MERICH (*rising from his chair*): Really?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA (*laughing*): No, I said that on purpose, so you'd sit a little further away. Really, Vladimir, sit a little further away, and let's talk. I want so much to talk with you.

MERICH (*absently*): Next time I'll bring you my diary, we'll read it over together; but now, I'll tell you what, let's go into the garden.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: How can we? Mamma'll come any moment.

MERICH: But is she coming pretty soon?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I think so.

MERICH: Good-by, then.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: You're bored already, aren't you? You're bored? What a fellow you are, Vladimir! If you only knew with what impatience I awaited you! How great my pleasure was at seeing you! But you won't sit with me ten minutes.

MERICH: I'm afraid Anna Petrovna will find me here; it might be unpleasant for you.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Well, what of it? She'd scold me, and that'd be all.

MERICH: I'd come in for my share, too. However, I have some absolutely necessary business. If you please, I'll stay ten minutes longer, but I can't any more. (*He sits down beside her.*) I'm ready to sit with you all my life and admire you.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: It looks as if you were close to me again.

MERICH: How strange you women are! Go away from you, and you get angry; get very close to you, and you don't like that either. Choose between them: either I'll go away, or I'll sit beside you.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Stay, only on this condition, that you sit with me a longer time.

MERICH: All right, all right! (*He embraces her. They sit for some time in silence.*) Just wait, Mary, my dear; the time will come when I'll call you my own, triumphantly, in public. Will you marry me?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Why do you ask?

MERICH: Maybe they won't let you marry me?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: What nonsense!

MERICH: However, I have to straighten out some of my business; and then, Mary, then— You and I'll begin to live together gloriously.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Only will that ever be?

MERICH: It will, Mary, it will. I shan't consider any obstacles!— If they won't give you to me—I'll carry you off!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Mamma's coming!

MERICH: Now where'll I hide? I'll surely meet her. I shouldn't like that.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Go across the garden.

MERICH: Good-by! (*He kisses her.*)

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Good-by! When're you coming again?

MERICH: Soon, soon.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Come as soon as you can! (*MERICH goes out.*)

SCENE VI

MARYA ANDREYEVNA *alone*

(*She sits down at her work*)

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Heavens, how happy I am! I can't recollect myself!— Now life isn't terrible for me. No matter what happens around me, I have hope. (*She sits musing. DOBROTVORSKY and ANNA PETROVNA come in; DARYA removes her mistress's cape, and goes out.*)

SCENE VII

MARYA ANDREYEVNA, DOBROTVORSKY, and ANNA PETROVNA

ANNA PETROVNA (*sitting down*): Now what can we do, Platon Markych?

DOBROTVORSKY: What's to be done, madam? God's will! Only you needn't despair.

ANNA PETROVNA: Now where shall I flee with my daughter? Just consider, Platon Markych! What do I know, what can I do? Even before this grief I didn't know what to do; but now I've become an utter fool. Advise me.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: What on earth has happened, mamma?

ANNA PETROVNA: Why, you and I are just beggars now. Our suit is lost; they'll take away the house and fine us over and above that.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Oh, what a misfortune!

ANNA PETROVNA: What's to be done, Platon Markych? Advise me.

DOBROTVORSKY: How can I advise you, madam? I can't do anything.

If you should order me hanged, I couldn't think up anything now. I've grown old and foolish. I was a man of law, Anna Petrovna!—What's to be done?— I've gone clean daft!—

ANNA PETROVNA: All the same, you're a man; but I can't make my mind work. I'm a weak, ignorant woman; and I have absolutely no memory.

DOBROTVORSKY: What kind of a man am I? Eh, eh! That's the way it always is; you don't expect it. You don't anticipate it—and then suddenly some misfortune! O Lord my God! (*Shakes his head.*)

ANNA PETROVNA: And this grief in my old age, too, Platon Markych! Alone, alone, without a man!— One burden more. I don't know how to get rid of it.

DOBROTVORSKY: Just so, madam, just so—but what's the use of talking?

ANNA PETROVNA: There's no use in grieving; it won't do any good.

DOBROTVORSKY: No good.

ANNA PETROVNA: We've got to get busy somehow: they say we must present a petition to the Senate.

DOBROTVORSKY: We must, madam, without fail we must; of course we must get busy.

ANNA PETROVNA: I haven't any acquaintances; there's no one to ask.

DOBROTVORSKY: Whom *could* you ask, madam! Who's going to take any trouble! If you ask, that means somebody has to give money.

ANNA PETROVNA: Just see, Platon Markych, if there isn't some one of your acquaintances who'll take our affairs in charge.

DOBROTVORSKY: Well really, except Maxim Dorofeich, there's no one to ask.

ANNA PETROVNA: That's just the thing! He was saying something to you last evening, as he was going away.

DOBROTVORSKY: Yes, he was. He says: "If they'll give me Marya Andrevna, then I'll get busy. It's still possible to straighten out that suit." Says he: "I like Marya Andrevna very much. I don't need any one better," he says. "Find out what her inclination is," says he; "and I'm ready right off."

ANNA PETROVNA: Why haven't you spoken of it before?

DOBROTVORSKY: Pardon me, madam, it slipped out of my head completely; but then the words came to my tongue, and I've said 'em.

ANNA PETROVNA: You hear, Mashenka!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: What's this?

ANNA PETROVNA: Maxim Dorofeich has taken a great fancy to you.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I'm very glad.

ANNA PETROVNA: Well, and thank God that you're glad; he makes you a proposal.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Not for anything on earth!

ANNA PETROVNA: I wonder if you've gone out of your head, you silly girl. Don't you see that now we've nothing more to do? We've nowhere in the world to go.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: It'd be better not to talk about Benevolensky, mamma; I don't want to hear about him.

ANNA PETROVNA: What's the matter, what's the matter with you! Recollect: you haven't a dozen suitors about you; you haven't any to choose from. And there aren't a hundred thousand after you, that you should scorn such a suitor. Such a match as this I never expected for you.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: For Heaven's sake, mamma, don't talk to me about Benevolensky.

ANNA PETROVNA: You're an utter fool, I see. But what's the use of talking with her? She still has nothing but wind in her head; she doesn't know herself what she's talking about!— Why should I listen to her foolishness? Platon Markych, tell Maxim Dorofeich that we are very happy that he has made a formal proposal.

DOBROTORSKY: Very well, madam. I'll tell him to-day.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA (*rises quickly from her chair*): What are you doing! Platon Markych, don't you go to Benevolensky! I don't like him, he's repulsive to me!— I won't marry him for anything on earth!

ANNA PETROVNA: What are you listening to her for? She's just jabbering nonsense! I really don't know what kind of trash has been drummed into her head. Do as I tell you; why listen to her? She'll change her mind twenty times yet.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I'm not going to say anything; do what you please, only I won't marry Benevolensky.

ANNA PETROVNA: You won't?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I won't.

ANNA PETROVNA: It seems to me this is mere caprice on your part; just that you may do something contrary to your mother's wishes. I only wanted to establish you. You just have pity on me in my old age; you see I can hardly drag my feet along. I'm an ignorant woman, and then such a blow: they're taking away my last bit of property! Here, they say, I must present a petition to the Senate; but who'll write it?— You and I, do you suppose? I don't know A from B. If Maxim Dorofeich won't take the matter up, then, you see, we'll be beggars; do you understand that? What pleasure will he find in taking charge of our business if you turn away your face from him? If you won't think about yourself, then at least pity your mother. Where shall I go in my old age? I'm a weak, ignorant woman; and now I can hardly drag my feet along. What, must I go out as a cook?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Lord! What shall I do!

ANNA PETROVNA: Obey your mother.

DOBROTVORSKY: You must obey your mother, my dear young lady.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: No! Do what you please with me; I cannot.

DOBROTVORSKY: Curb your own wishes.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I cannot, I cannot, I cannot!—

ANNA PETROVNA: Leave her alone, Platon Markych! Let her go to the dickens!— Platon Markych, how do you think this seems to me, a mother, an old woman? (*She weeps.*) Holy saints! Where's my handkerchief? That's the way: I've lost it in town, and with my money, too!— One thing after another! Ah well, let it all go up in smoke; I need nothing, since even my own daughter won't think about my grief. Live as you think best, and get along with you! I've raised her to my own ruin.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Mamma, what are you saying! Why do you torment me?—

ANNA PETROVNA: You obey your mother! You think it's easy for me to talk to you.— Sometimes I'm really at a loss. I have a weak, womanish heart.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Mamma! I dislike him very much. I'm ready to do anything for you that you please, only don't compel me to get married; I don't want to get married. I won't marry any one.

ANNA PETROVNA: Just listen to her, Platon Markych, she's entirely mad. You see, you don't understand what you're saying! How can you say such a thing: "I won't get married!" That's all mere imagination. Very interesting to be an old maid! As for me, I suppose I can go to the poorhouse! In the first place, if you love your mother, you ought to get married for that reason; and in the second place, because it's the necessary thing. What on earth is an unmarried woman? Nothing! What does she amount to? It's bad enough to be a widow, but to be an old maid is simply awful. A woman ought to live with a husband, keep house, raise children; but what are you going to do as an old maid? Knit stockings! Have you thought about that?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: No, mamma, I haven't thought about that.

ANNA PETROVNA: Now, come here, and sit down by me! We'll have a good little talk together. I shan't get angry. (*MARYA ANDREYEVNA sits down beside her.*) Just listen to me coolly. Now I know that there's one thing you talk about: a marriage for love. Mashenka, only those men who can't get married fall in love; either early because they're still wearing jackets, or when they haven't anything with which to keep a wife; then they fall in love. A thorough gentleman isn't going to declare himself in love, nor show off his infatuation; but he'll simply go to the mother and say: "I like your daughter." And to you also,

directly, without any farcical nonsense, he'll say: "Young lady, your mother is willing; I like you; will you make me happy?" And all that is honorable and well-bred. That's the way it is, Mashenka. Here you didn't say ten words to Benevolensky, and yet you don't want to hear about him. Well, he'll come to call, you'll get acquainted, and then maybe you'll see that he's a good man. You see, those young weather-cocks of yours are good only at talking; but as for their ever doing anything worth while, they have a bad reputation.

DOBROTVORSKY: That's true, young lady. (*Silence.*)

ANNA PETROVNA: Mashenka, please me in my old age; obey your mother.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA (*rising*): Mamma! I cannot now marry either Benevolensky or any one else. Be kind enough not to force me. I ask only one thing of you: don't talk about marriage to me; wait a little bit. For God's sake, let me live at liberty!

ANNA PETROVNA: How lovely an unmarried girl's life is! You're sorry to part with it!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Let Benevolensky come to see us; I'll be gracious to him, anything you please; only let him wait—well, a month—just one month. I'll take a good look at him; I'll find out about him. Do you agree?

ANNA PETROVNA (*kissing MARYA ANDREYEVNA*): Well, what's to be done with you? Let it be so. Well, are you pleased now? Dear, dear, what a foolish girl you are! (*MARYA ANDREYEVNA goes out.*)

ANNA PETROVNA: What's to be done, Platon Markych? Tell Maxim Dorofeich that I'm very glad; but to wait a month before making his proposal.— Yes, and ask him about my business.

DOBROTVORSKY: Very well, ma'am.

(*MADAM HORKOV comes in.*)

SCENE VIII

The same and MADAM HORKOV

MADAM HORKOV: I humbly thank you, my dear Anna Petrovna; I humbly thank you! You've done me a great favor, I must say!

ANNA PETROVNA: What's the matter? What have I done to you?

MADAM HORKOV: Although I'm an uneducated woman, I won't allow myself to be laughed at. A while ago you gave me reason to hope. I, of course, go home and say: "Misha, my dear, Anna Petrovna agrees. Disclose your thoughts, my dear," I say, "to Marya Andrevna." And then she flatly refused him! He comes home utterly distracted. "Mamma," says he; "there's no happiness in life for me; you deceived

me!" he says. "I, my dear," I say, "have never been deceitful; but if she scorns us, there's nothing," I say, "for you to be unhappy about. You with your education can always find you a bride no worse than Marya Andrevna.— I won't endure this; let her rail at me; I'll go, all the same, and read Anna Petrovna a lecture."

ANNA PETROVNA: What can I do? It's her wish; I can't compel her.

MADAM HORKOV: That, Anna Petrovna, is simply sarcasm; and I take it as such.

ANNA PETROVNA: But, my dear, if you please, how is it sarcasm?

MADAM HORKOV: Yes, sarcasm! You simply wanted to make a fool of me before my son. Although I'm an uneducated woman, I understand—

ANNA PETROVNA: What is it you understand! There's nothing here for you to understand!

MADAM HORKOV: Now then, don't you talk, please!— I know a thing or two. You have a certain rich suitor on the carpet now, and so you scorn others. Only hurry, Anna Petrovna, I advise you; otherwise there may be some talk.

ANNA PETROVNA: What kind of talk? What do you mean? — Have you come to quarrel with me, Anna Egorovna?

MADAM HORKOV: Take it as you please, my dear: you've insulted me out and out. What I don't know, I'm not going to talk about; but what I do know, I'll publish. People lie, and you're not above it.

ANNA PETROVNA: A tongue has no bones; it's possible to say anything; but there's no use listening to it.

MADAM HORKOV: People can listen or not as they please; but if they talk, that means there's some reason for it.

ANNA PETROVNA: Who talks, and what does he say? Who had anything to say against me?

MADAM HORKOV: The talk isn't against you, but Marya Andrevna. She's mighty haughty, that girl of yours; but this will take her down a peg. She refused us; but look out that that rich suitor of yours himself don't refuse when he hears something!

ANNA PETROVNA: Why, Anna Egorovna, it must be you've lost your senses! And who dares to say anything against my Mashenka?

MADAM HORKOV: Ah, my dear, you can't stop up anybody's mouth! Everybody's free to talk; that's what the tongue's for!

ANNA PETROVNA: What in the world is this! Just listen, Platon Markych, they've even spread abroad some scandal about Mashenka! How outrageous!

DOBROTVOFSKY: There's no pleasing everybody, madam. You needn't pay any attention.

ANNA PETROVNA (*to DOBROTVORSKY*): But what can be said against my Mashenka, please tell me!

MADAM HORKOV: Well, here's what! Why does Merich come here every day? The neighbors see it: there's no hiding it. It happens when you're here, and when you're away. Perhaps even you yourself don't know all about it. I'm an uneducated woman, but I wouldn't allow my daughter to do that. My son tells me they won't allow that Merich in a single respectable house, because of his dirty tricks. I saw with my own eyes how he sneaked away from here through the garden, just like a thief.

ANNA PETROVNA: What's this, good Lord! That's what it means not to have a man in the house: anybody invents anything that comes into his head! Here's a woman's business for you! Have pity on me, Anna Egorovna! I'm a weak, ignorant woman; why do you disturb me? Aren't you ashamed?

MADAM HORKOV: Chop a man's head off, and he won't cry over his hair. You're to blame for letting her go so far. Now just hunt for suitors: not every one will be flattered. Even if you were willing, I shouldn't permit my Misha. No, I humbly thank you!

ANNA PETROVNA: I don't care anything about Misha or you either! What a choice match! Something unheard of! You only want to spread scandal.—

MADAM HORKOV (*rising*): Well, my dear, don't hold me to account. What I have heard, I shan't conceal from others.

ANNA PETROVNA: Conceal! You'll put in some of your own! You were glad of the opportunity. That's all one might expect from you.

MADAM HORKOV: And I myself have never had anything but insult and sarcasm from you. Only I couldn't bear not speaking my mind to you regarding Misha; otherwise I shouldn't have set foot in your house. I shan't permit Misha even to think about your daughter: with his intellect and education we'll find a more respectable girl! (*She goes out.*)

SCENE IX

The same without MADAM HORKOV

ANNA PETROVNA: What on earth is this? Platon Markych, consider for yourself. You see, I couldn't collect myself; otherwise I'd have sung her to sleep. Now, you see, most likely she'll spread the news everywhere—she'll simply ruin me! Here's how it is without a man, Platon Markych! Here and there, you must be everywhere at once, and keep looking after your daughter: you don't dare go away from the house; but then, I'm an ignorant woman. Masha! Masha! Darya! Darya!

(DARYA comes in.) What's the matter, have you gone deaf? One can't make you hear!— Call the young lady in.

DARYA: I have more than one thing to do, you see. I don't sit with my hands folded! (*She goes out.*)

ANNA PETROVNA: Oh, I'm utterly worn out to-day; and then this has to happen. Both my hands and my feet tremble. What is it Masha is doing with me! I feel that I'm a weak mother. Take my part, Platon Markych! (MARYA ANDREYEVNA comes in.)

SCENE X

The same and MARYA ANDREYEVNA

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Did you call me, mamma?

ANNA PETROVNA: What do you mean; do you want to drive me into my grave before my time? What have you contrived now?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: What do you mean?

ANNA PETROVNA: Was Merich here while I was gone? (*Silence.*) Why don't you talk?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: He was, for a little while. I told him that you weren't at home, and he went away.

ANNA PETROVNA: Don't you deceive me. What kind of an intrigue have you got with him? Speak!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Who told you of any intrigue, mamma?

ANNA PETROVNA: Who told me? Everybody's talking. I can't show my face anywhere now. Just now that Horkov woman came here: even she knows. Don't let him even look in here, I positively forbid it. Do you hear, young lady?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: No, mamma, that's impossible.

ANNA PETROVNA: Why is it? Is there any reason to stand on ceremony with him? He's no high and mighty person! I'll drive him out, and that's all. You've got to get married; but with these talks a-going you won't soon find a suitor. You've shamed me utterly. You've either got to give your word at once to Maxim Dorofeich, or I'll tell Merich to-morrow never to show his face here again!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Don't do that, for God's sake! I beseech you, mamma! How can you!

ANNA PETROVNA: Then get married!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Mamma, give me time to think! I'm utterly at a loss; my head goes round. Give me time to think!

ANNA PETROVNA: What's there to think about! Something must be done at once, or Maxim Dorofeich will hear this scandal, and refuse, if you please! Then what would I do with my poor head? How shameful

that would be! You must tell Maxim Dorofeich to-morrow, that we're agreed.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: No, mamma, that's beyond my strength!

ANNA PETROVNA: Then live as you think proper! I'll have nothing more to do with you, now. I raised you, educated you; I worry, taking no rest for myself by day or by night—and you don't want to know me! For you, your mother is cheaper than any one, Lord forgive you! Now I shan't say a word to you; carry on with anybody you like! You have forgotten your mother, you don't want to do a thing for your mother; perhaps some kind people will turn up who won't abandon the old woman. Let's go, Platon Markych, into my room. (*She rises and goes.*) Evidently I must lead a hard life in my old age.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA (*after her*): Mamma!

ANNA PETROVNA: Don't you come after me! Now I don't want to see you! (*She goes out.*)

SCENE XI

MARYA ANDREYEVNA and DOBROTVORSKY

(MARYA ANDREYEVNA *sits down on a chair and covers her face with her handkerchief. DOBROTVORSKY stands opposite her.*)

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: What torture!

DOBROTVORSKY: What, your mother scolded you! Well, that's nothing! Don't cry, young lady! You'll make it up somehow.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Ah, Platon Markych! It may be mamma is right; but she demands an impossibility of me.

DOBROTVORSKY: And why impossible, my dear young lady? By Heaven, it's possible! Humor the old woman. Why, see here, you couldn't find a better husband than Maxim Dorofeich.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Listen, Platon Markych: you're a good man, and I'm going to speak openly with you. I love another; he is good, clever, educated; consider yourself, how can I change him for Benevolensky?

DOBROTVORSKY: Is he a young man, miss?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Very young.—

DOBROTVORSKY: They're just whistlers, my dear; they have no solidity whatever. Don't you trust 'em. To-day he's in love, but to-morrow he's tired of it. It's fun for them, but the poor girls weep.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I don't know whether he'll get tired of me or not; only I love him.

DOBROTVORSKY: My dear young lady, I knew you when you were so high; you were still a thoughtless babe when I carried you in my arms. Your papa, now at rest, was my benefactor; he set me up in the world:

before that I was a very insignificant man. When the dear departed expired, he said: "Platon, don't forsake my wife and daughter!" "I hear you," I said, "my dear Andrey Petrovich, I shall serve them as long as I have strength." Young lady, I love you more than if you were my daughter; how bitter it would be for me, if any young weather-cock should get the laugh on you! You spit on them! Of course you may say, young lady, that you know better than we do, that we're old folks, and have outlived our judgment. I don't dare advise you; reason it out for yourself. Here, in my old age, young lady, I undertook to arrange your marriage. I found a man; it seems, a good one, but the Lord only knows! How can I make him out? Look him over yourself. I don't want to risk making a mistake. My whole advice is that it's better to obey your mother, and there'll be less chance of going wrong.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Platon Markych, make my peace with mamma; she likes you.

DOBROTVORSKY: Don't be uneasy, my dear, I'll do it; don't be uneasy about that!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Go tell her that in three days I'll give her an answer. I must think, talk it over with *him*; he promised to marry me!

DOBROTVORSKY: All right, young lady. Do you want me to go to your mamma at once?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Yes, at once, please. I'm always unhappy when she's angry, whether for cause or not.

DOBROTVORSKY: Why shouldn't you be, my dear—you see, she's your mother. All right, ma'am. (*He goes out.*)

SCENE XII

MARYA ANDREYEVNA *alone, and later DARYA*

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: What shall I do; I positively do not know! I feel that I'm doing wrong to quarrel with mamma; but marry Benevolensky I cannot—I love Vladimir. And if I should resolve to sacrifice myself, I haven't the right now. Why should I deceive poor Vladimir: he loves me so much.

DARYA (*coming in*): Oh, plague take you!— She's everlastingly losing something! (*She picks up ANNA PETROVNA's handkerchief.*)

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Dasha, what's mamma doing?

DARYA: Talking with Platon Markych.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Is she angry?

DARYA: I can't get near her! (*She goes out.*)

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I'm sorry for mamma, by Heaven I am! If I hadn't committed an indiscretion I could tell her openly now that I

don't like Benevolensky; but now I cannot; now I have only one means: talk it over with Vladimir, then we'll tell mamma, and there'll be nothing to think about. Ah, fool that I am, what am I crying about? A man tells me outright that he'll marry me, and I weep, thinking up all sorts of misfortunes. (*She laughs, then muses.*) But what if he won't? What if he won't? What then? However, what right have I to think so ill about him: I don't even know him yet. But what's that, good Lord! What am I saying? I'm all mixed up. Another girl in my place would leap for joy; but all sorts of nonsense creeps into my head. No, no, I won't think about anything! Vladimir will marry me! Oh, if I could only see him soon! (*DOBROTVORSKY comes in.*)

SCENE XIII

MARYA ANDREYEVNA and DOBROTVORSKY

DOBROTVORSKY: Please go to your mother, young lady. I have persuaded her a little. Don't be afraid of anything; she isn't going to scold you now, she wants to have a talk. "Let her see," she says, "that her mother doesn't wish her any evil." Let's go right away and talk things over together; I think, young lady, we'll settle it somehow. (*They go out.*)

ACT IV

Same room as in Act I

SCENE I

MARYA ANDREYEVNA alone

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: This is the third day, and he hasn't come. What does that mean? The third day of awful torture! It must be he's ill! Why, if he doesn't come to-day, I believe I'll go mad. How imperceptibly this grief has stolen upon me. A week ago I was happy and carefree. And now I am waiting for Benevolensky to come and make his proposal. What shall I do? Mamma has so much confidence in me; she loves me so.— Now her tranquillity depends upon me. I wonder if I shall have the strength to oppose her.

(*DARYA comes in.*)

SCENE II

MARYA ANDREYEVNA and DARYA

DARYA: Oh, plague— I have to be everywhere myself and attend to things!— What are you so gloomy about, miss?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: What have I to be happy about? Tell my fortune for me by the cards, Dasha.

DARYA: If you wish, miss, I'll lay them out at once. (*She lays out the cards.*)

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Well, Dasha, do you get any result? It's all nonsense, I suppose.

DARYA: No, my dear, don't say that. Not long ago I told my chum Aksina's fortune: the guilty ace kept coming out. "Look here," I says; "you're going to have some grief or other." Well, miss, and so it was: they stole her brand-new cloak. (*She spreads her arms.*) I'll start with clubs in your behalf; we'll stick to that suit—fulfillment of wishes—king of diamonds matched.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Who does the king of diamonds mean?

DARYA: Why, Vladimir Vasilyich, of course; who could it be? (*ANNA PETROVNA comes in.*)

SCENE III

The same and ANNA PETROVNA

ANNA PETROVNA: What's this, fortune telling? Tell mine too, Darya.

DARYA: If you wish, my dear, right away.

ANNA PETROVNA: What queen do I select to tell my fortune by? Don't you remember, Mashenka?

DARYA: I'll make you the queen of hearts, my dear. Oh, miss, the postman's coming! (*She goes out for a letter.*)

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Who's it from? Good Heavens, how my heart beats! (*DARYA returns with a letter.*)

ANNA PETROVNA: Dasha, just look for my spectacles. (*She unseals the letter.*)

DARYA: Here they are, my dear.

ANNA PETROVNA (*looking at the signature*): From Benevolensky.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: From Benevolensky? What does he write?

ANNA PETROVNA (*reads*): "Dear madam, highly-esteemed Anna Petrovna! Taking into consideration the good will and the cordial reception with which you welcomed me last Thursday, I take upon myself the boldness to offer my hand and heart to your most incom-

parable daughter, Marya Andreyevna, with whose virtues and beauty I am charmed. At the same time, I have the honor to subjoin that I have heard from Platon Markych about your suit, in which, as an expert in such matters, I may be an agent; only in the event, of course, of your agreeing to accept my proposal. I am a man of affairs, and I cannot lose time for nothing on other people's troubles. You know my property; and I strive vigilantly to increase it, employing to that end all my energies; for, as you know, property gives weight in society. Taking into consideration the above, and at the same time the position in which you find yourself, I do not believe that you will refuse to become related to me. I shall expect your answer to-day, or, at the very latest, to-morrow, that I may not remain in ignorance. Communicate my humblest respect to Marya Andreyevna, and give her to understand that I, as her passionate adorer, await with heartfelt trepidation her reply. With sincere respect and like devotion, I have the honor to remain, Maxim Benevolensky." Well then, Mashenka, we must write.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA (*in agitation*): Wait a while, mamma, wait a while!—

ANNA PETROVNA: Wait for what? Masha, listen to me! Never again shall you and I see such a match as this. Maxim Dorofeich is a sensitive man; we've got to write something to him, so he'll not mistrust anything at least.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Wait a bit, mamma, for Heaven's sake, wait a bit; to-morrow—to-morrow!—

ANNA PETROVNA: But why not now?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Now I can't. I don't know what to reply, I'm so agitated—I'm kind of sick; my head aches. I absolutely cannot!—

ANNA PETROVNA: Well, as you please! To-morrow then, to-morrow. But all the same, I'm going to think how to write it in the best style. (*She goes out.*)

SCENE IV

MARYA ANDREYEVNA and DARYA

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Dasha, do you know where Vladimir Vasilyich lives?

DARYA: I do, my dear.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Run to him, Dasha my darling, run as quickly as possible!

DARYA: What do you mean, my dear! What if your mother finds out!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Go along, never mind, go along! I'll tell

mamma somehow. Only, for Heaven's sake, be quick! Tell him to come here at once, this minute.

DARYA: Evidently there's nothing to be done with you!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Hurry up, Dasha, hurry up! (DARYA goes out.)

SCENE V

MARYA ANDREYEVNA *alone*

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: No, this shall not be! Vladimir will save me!— What if she doesn't find him at home! Well, and if—no, that cannot be; he loves me. Now I myself can't make out what I think or what I feel—I just have an awful sensation!— Ah, if she'd only hurry and get back! Who's coming? Can it be he? No, it's Milashin. (MILASHIN *comes in*.)

SCENE VI

MARYA ANDREYEVNA *and* MILASHIN

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Tell me, Ivan Ivanych, have you seen Vladimir Vasilyich?

MILASHIN: What's he to you?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Ah, good Heavens; when I ask, that means there's some necessity!

MILASHIN: Well, who can tell about him! Is it possible, do you suppose, to know where people like him are! (MARYA ANDREYEVNA *turns away and weeps*.)

MILASHIN: You think I say that from jealousy. You're deeply mistaken. I'm sorry for you, and nothing more.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Do me the kindness not to be sorry. What right have you to be sorry for me?

MILASHIN: Just as you please! I say that because of my attachment to you and to your mother. Once more I repeat, that I, in Anna Petrovna's place, would not allow such a man as Merich to come near the gates. If Anna Petrovna wants him to spread the news everywhere, to brag that you're in love with him, why, let her receive him.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: You lie!

MILASHIN: I lie? No, I never lie, ma'am. Somebody else may lie, but I don't.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: What makes you talk to me about him? You know I'll not believe you. I love him, do you hear? I love him, I love him! Don't you dare say anything bad about him in my presence!

MILASHIN: You love him? But does he love you, do you think?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Listen, I'm beginning to lose patience! Either keep still, or go away from me!

MILASHIN (*sits down on the other side of the room. Silence*): You have insulted me, Marya Andrevna; cruelly insulted me. I wished you well; I've known you from childhood; but you drive me away from you. Tell me, if you please, how have I deserved this? (*Silence.*) I only, by the right of friendship, wanted to warn you.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Warn me against whom? I don't need your warnings.

MILASHIN: Now, indeed, I see that you don't: you believe him so blindly that you won't listen to any one. Well, I'm not going to undeceive you; but, all the same, that doesn't keep me from knowing a few things about him that are none too good.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: You may know and you may talk to anybody you please; but all the same, nobody'll believe you.

MILASHIN: What, I'm a scoundrel, am I, in your opinion? Here's what I get from you for my devotion!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: What have you found out? Speak!

MILASHIN: I've found out so much I can't tell it all.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: But have you any evidence?

MILASHIN: What kind of evidence do I need? His conduct is clear without any evidence.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Well, if you haven't any evidence, I tell you simply that I don't believe you! I don't believe you! I don't believe you!

MILASHIN: Maybe some day I'll prove my words to you by facts; only it may be too late!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: That's none of your business. When you have the evidence, then talk; but until that time, keep still! (*Silence.*) Why does it take so long? (*She looks out of the window. Silence.*) At last!

MILASHIN: Who is it?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Vladimir Vasilyich. Well, he'll catch it from me!

(*MERICH comes in.*)

SCENE VII

The same and MERICH

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: What happened to you! Aren't you ashamed?

MERICH (*kissing her hand*): Guilty, Marya Andrevna, guilty! I shan't try to put myself right. How do you do, Ivan Ivanych!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I have to tell you some news, not wholly agreeable.

MERICH: Disagreeable! That's bad. You scare me.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Yes, for me, very disagreeable.

MERICH: But if it's disagreeable for you, then it is for me also.

MILASHIN: Why is that so, permit me to ask?

MERICH: For a very simple reason, Ivan Ivanych: I take very near to heart everything that concerns Marya Andrevna. Now do you understand?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Yes, Ivan Ivanych, this matter concerns us both.

MILASHIN: In that case, pardon me.

MERICH: Why is it you've grown thinner and paler, Marya Andreyevna?

MARY ANDREYEVNA: I tell you that much that is unpleasant has happened to me; indeed, it's enough that I haven't seen you for three days. What haven't I thought over in that time!—

MERICH: If I have been to the least degree the cause of your grief, then I count myself so guilty that I shan't dare to justify myself. You have a kind heart. I shall try to expiate my misconduct. Give me your little hand in token of reconciliation. (*He kisses MARYA ANDREYEVNA's hand.*)

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Well, of course, you're to blame. The idea of not looking in on me for almost a week! To the dickens with you! I just sent Darya after you.

MERICH: Evidently she didn't find me at home. She and I missed each other.

MILASHIN (*aside*): This is unbearable!

MERICH: Why did you send Darya after me?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: To bring you here. I need very much to have a talk with you about a very important matter.

MILASHIN: Good-by, Marya Andrevna.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Where're you going?

MILASHIN: After the evidence.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I wish you success. (*MILASHIN goes out.*)

SCENE VIII

MARYA ANDREYEVNA and MERICH

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Vladimir, Vladimir! What are you doing with me! I waited and waited for you, but you didn't come!

MERICH: What's this, what's this! What are you crying about?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Vladimir, a dreadful misfortune has come upon us! We've lost the suit—they'll take everything away from us.

MERICH: Good Lord!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: What's to be done now? Mamma says that we'll have nothing to live on. My sole means is to sacrifice myself, to marry Benevolensky. I can't recover myself. To-day I have to give my answer.

MERICH: How abominable!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA (*embracing him*): Vladimir, save me!

MERICH (*freeing himself*): Wait, wait! Let's talk it over coolly.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: How can I talk about that coolly! Vladimir, what shall I do!— My life and death depend upon that. (*She embraces him.*)

MERICH: How careless you are, Mary! If any one should see us, what would he say?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: It's all the same to me now, whatever people may say.

MERICH: But how am I to blame! You see, it'll all fall on me; they'll say God knows what about me. You know what kind of a reputation I have without that.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: You're afraid? You weren't afraid before, if I recollect.

MERICH: You don't understand. Now it's an entirely different matter; then your mother wasn't here.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: What shall I do! By Heaven, I don't know!

MERICH: Ah, how bad this is; I absolutely wasn't expecting it!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Vladimir! If I had never seen you, I should have married any one mamma wanted me to. I fell in love with you; you told me you loved me: how can I separate from you now?

MERICH: Tell me, Mary, as a favor, what do you want from me?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Vladimir, consider what you're saying! In what a situation you place me! I'm ashamed for myself. I tell you my misfortune as to a friend, and you ask me what I want! Do I have to ask you to marry me? Spare me!

MERICH: Ah, Mary, Mary! You don't know in what strange circumstances I am now. (*He walks about the room.*) I positively can't devise anything now—positively nothing.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Nothing?

MERICH: Nothing.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Oh, my God! (*She covers her face with her hands.*)

MERICH: Here, here now, this is all just inexperience! I had to run away from you. Why did I ever meet you! Oh, fate, fate! It

would have been easier for me never to have met you, than to watch how you are suffering. However, I didn't think you would become so attached to me.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: What did you think?

MERICH: I thought that nothing serious would come of our relations.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: You wanted to pass the time away, and amuse yourself, isn't that so? Why didn't you say yourself that you were tired of playing with love?

MERICH: But don't I love you? Don't I suffer now? Oh, if only you could look into my soul! But what can be done? We must submit to our lot; we must be firmer, Mary!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I was firm, until you deceived me so cruelly. And you're not sorry for me? Speak, for Heaven's sake.

MERICH: I'm very sorry for you, Mary; and all the more so because I cannot help you in any way. I cannot marry you: why, my father won't permit it. Of course, I shouldn't consider him; but circumstances, circumstances, which oppress me all my life—

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Ah, my God! Tell me why you deceived me; why did you swear when I didn't demand it of you?

MERICH: I love you, Mary! I was carried away, and didn't realize. I'm a very passionate man.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: You loved me? You never loved me! I alone loved. Now your conduct has become clear to me. Although it's late, I've found you out. O Lord my God! And you dared to call that love! Fine love!—not only without self-sacrifice, but even without passion. All the blame falls on me; they'll not forgive anything I've done—I throw myself upon your neck, and you glance around to see if any one is looking. You just recollect: it used to be that I waited, and could hardly wait until you came. I'd look for you with all my eyes, but you'd come as if it meant nothing; you'd only think over at home what to say, and how to take each step.

MERICH: You hurt me. Well, you can say what you want: you have the right to.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Don't talk, for God's sake! Now at least show you have some conscience. There's no need for you to lie now. Now you have only to boast of your successes.

MERICH: Listen, however; what do you take me for?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: For what I must.

MERICH: That's more than I can stand. (*He takes his hat.*)

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: You're going? Good-by!

MERICH: I can't listen to that! Well, I'm to blame, I admit it; but it isn't all as you say. Just the same I'm an honorable man. You see,

circumstances, Mary, mean a good deal.— How are you going to know all that—you women?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I believe you, I believe you.

MERICH: No, really. Don't get angry at me. With all my love for you, I could not and cannot act otherwise. You may say what you please; all the same I shall still say that I love you. You don't believe that! You're mistaken and you hurt me. Can I help loving you, such a beautiful, innocent creature?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Stop, for God's sake!

MERICH: Under other circumstances, I would have given everything on earth for the happiness of possessing you.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Put an end to that.

MERICH: But it was not so destined for me. What's to be done! We must part.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Good-by, good-by!

(MERICH *kisses her hand, goes out slowly, then returns.*)

MERICH: No, I absolutely cannot go away without looking at you once more. (*He stands, his arms folded on his breast.*) You aren't angry at me?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: No, I'm not angry.

MERICH: That's fine. Good-by, Mary, good-by! I wish you every happiness! (*He walks away a little.*) Forget me! (*He goes out.*)

SCENE IX

MARYA ANDREYEVNA *alone*

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: And I trusted that man! How ashamed of myself I am!— He's gone away; and it's nothing to him! He's even glad, I think, that he has parted from me.— And I, I? Why must I suffer; of what am I guilty! Oh, Lord! Why is there so little truth in people! Could I know that he was deceiving me? How was I going to know? By what means could I find out?— Why did he deceive me! (*She weeps. MILASHIN comes in.*)

SCENE X

MARYA ANDREYEVNA *and* MILASHIN

MILASHIN: Here's the evidence, Marya Andrevna.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: There's no need now.

MILASHIN: And so I told the truth. If you please, I know him very well. (*He reads.*) "Pardon my boldness, but I can no longer conceal the passion which is consuming me." Say, here's tenderness!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: What is it you're reading there?

MILASHIN: Here, please take a look. (*He gives her some notes. MARYA ANDREYEVNA reads to herself.*) You said, not long ago, that I lied; I remember that, Marya Andrevna.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA (*tears the notes and flings them out of the window*): This was the only thing lacking! This is awful!

MILASHIN: I have still another. Don't you want it?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Ah, good Heavens! What good will they do me? Leave me, for God's sake! You see in what a state I am. (*After a brief silence.*) I have just seen Vladimir Vasilyich.

MILASHIN: What about him?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA (*weeping*): He wouldn't have anything to do with me. He says that we must submit to our fate.

MILASHIN: Scoundrel! Stop, Marya Andrevna, don't cry! I'm ready to sacrifice my life for you. Tell me how I can help you, Marya Andrevna; I'm ready for anything.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: You can't do anything for me. Just let me get a little calmer. My self-love is hurt, I'm ashamed of myself. I'm not crying because I have to sacrifice myself: I've already grown reconciled to that thought; but because I was the plaything of a frivolous man. How can you help me?

MILASHIN: Do you want me to challenge him to a duel? Do you think I wouldn't dare? I will without fail.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: What are you thinking up! Why should you do that? What right have you?

MILASHIN: Yes, indeed, it's awkward! I just asked you: but then, just as you please. Life isn't dear to me—I can't bear to see how you suffer! Is there absolutely no way in which I can help you?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: In one way only: leave me in peace.

MILASHIN: You drive me away! Is this how you act towards me! Well, I'll just show you that I don't deserve it. Marya Andrevna, I am not Merich! I understand your situation very well. To marry Benevolensky! It makes no difference to what kind of a beast the freakish notion to seek your hand comes, you have to marry him! No, that's unbearable! That's awfully disgusting! I'll tell you what, Marya Andrevna! I'm a poor man; maybe I don't know how to support myself alone, to say nothing of a wife; but I shouldn't have done as Merich has, nor have yielded you as a sacrifice to Benevolensky. Marya Andrevna, I offer you my hand; I want to show you that I am an honorable man.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Ah, Ivan Ivanych, I shouldn't like to offend you, but there's nothing for me to do. I'm not in need of your help, nor of your honor; I wouldn't marry you for anything in the world.

MILASHIN: Yes, of course, I'm not Benevolensky; he's a suitor to be proud of.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Benevolensky is a man with property, and mamma wants me to marry him; that's why I shall prefer Benevolensky.

MILASHIN: Don't you want to? As you choose! Only one thing hurts me: why do you degrade me, and place me lower than that Merich fellow? I'm making you an honorable proposal, and you get angry at me; but you didn't drive Merich away when he was running after you.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Listen, what do you take me for? You haven't even any respect for me. No, this must be stopped at once. That's enough crying. (*She wipes her eyes.*) If Merich should make a proposal now, I wouldn't marry him. I'll marry Benevolensky, that's decided. Can you see that I've been crying? I want to show mamma that it cost me no effort to resolve on this marriage. Let her be happy and at ease; I'll take it all upon myself. That's enough pouting for you, too. Take a look; now really, can you see any tears?

MILASHIN: Hardly at all.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Well, thank Heaven! We'll just laugh and chat about something casual. Haven't you been to the theatre any lately?

MILASHIN: You think to deceive me and yourself, too. Why so? I know, you see, what you have in your heart.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA (*stamping her foot*): I'm absolutely not deceiving you; truly, I've grown suddenly happy, somehow. Let's play something or other. Oh, here are the cards! Let's play cards.

MILASHIN: All right then, if you want to. (*He sits at the table.*)

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: What'll it be? Let's play old maid.

MILASHIN (*dealing*): Let's play, let's play. Listen, Marya Andreyevna, you're pretending. You don't want me to see your tears. Why do you dissemble before me: I'm not a stranger to you! That's annoying!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Play away, play away, or else you'll get stuck.

MILASHIN: You're so proud that you don't want to let me share your lot. Come, it's evident that you're pretending.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: See, you're stuck! (*She laughs.*)

MILASHIN: Sure, I'm stuck. (*He shuffles the cards and deals.*) Come, this is awfully annoying! This is pride! You humiliate me by it; you don't consider me worth anything!—

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: You accept? Accept some more? Well, so you're stuck again! (*She laughs.*)

MILASHIN: Come, this is simply unbearable!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Deal, deal; what's the matter with you?

(MILASHIN deals. MARYA ANDREYEVNA muses, covers her eyes with her handkerchief and leans upon the table; then she wipes her eyes and takes the cards.) Whose turn is it; mine?

(ANNA PETROVNA comes in.)

SCENE XI

The same and ANNA PETROVNA

ANNA PETROVNA: What are you laughing about?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Why, Ivan Ivanych keeps getting stuck. You absolutely don't know how to play. Mamma, when are we going to write our answer to Maxim Dorofeich? (*She continues to play cards.*) Thank him for his offer, and write him that I'm agreed.

ANNA PETROVNA: You're agreed, Masha? Well, thank you, you've made me happy! Here, now I see that you love me. You've made me happy!— So happy I can't tell you!— Ivan Ivanych, what a daughter I have: so pretty and clever! Where was that paper? Here now, all of a sudden I can't think what to write. (*She takes paper and writes.* MARYA ANDREYEVNA and MILASHIN play cards.)

MARYA ANDREYEVNA (*to MILASHIN*): I hope this'll end soon; my strength won't hold out any longer. (*She rises.*) Give it here, I'll help you. What are you writing?

ANNA PETROVNA: Just this: "Maxim Dorofeich, dear sir: I thank you for your flattering offer to us. Mashenka is agreed, and invites you to a cup of tea to-day." Is it all right so? I really don't know. Huh? Or shall I write another?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: No, that's very nice, very nice! Now send it off quickly.

ANNA PETROVNA: No, is it really all right? Ivan Ivanych, is it?

MILASHIN: Very good.

ANNA PETROVNA: Shouldn't I add something?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: No, not another thing is necessary—that's enough. Send it off quickly. Darya, Darya! (*DARYA comes in.*) Send some one quickly with this letter to Maxim Dorofeich. Go quickly, Darya. I can't hold out any longer.— Ivan Ivanych, I'm giddy! (*MILASHIN runs up and places a chair for her; MARYA ANDREYEVNA sits for some time exhausted, then bursts into tears.*)

ANNA PETROVNA: Mashenka! Mashenka! What's this! What's the matter with you?

MILASHIN (*aside*): What on earth is this!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Nothing, it'll pass off. I'm kind of giddy. Don't be uneasy.

ANNA PETROVNA: Kiss me, Mashenka! My darling—

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Mamma, is he a good man?

ANNA PETROVNA: Good! I won't give you to a bad one!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA (*in tears*): He's going to love me? If he'll love me, I'll love him.

ANNA PETROVNA: But what are you crying about, silly darling?

MILASHIN: Does it surprise you that Marya Andrevna is crying? That's strange!

ANNA PETROVNA: What is there strange, my dear? She herself expressed the desire to marry Benevolensky, and now she's crying. Isn't he a good match?

MILASHIN: What is there especially desirable in Benevolensky?

ANNA PETROVNA: Why, you're still young to judge people older than yourself! He's a sedate man, not much over thirty, and he has property; he's engaged in business, but you have nothing but foolishness and triviality in your mind!

MILASHIN: Property! But where did he get that property, I'd like to ask. I have a conscience, and therefore no property. It's no great trick to acquire property.

ANNA PETROVNA: Well, go ahead and acquire some, and then talk!

MILASHIN: Now I can express an opinion as to who is an honorable man, and who isn't. Happiness isn't in wealth, but in peace of soul. To unite one's fate with such a man, whom, if you don't look out, they'll bring to trial—

ANNA PETROVNA: Yes, much need I have of all this arguing! I, my dear, am the mother! I shan't do anything heedlessly. You're still pretty young to teach me! Get some children of your own, and then try to marry 'em off the best way you can. Anybody can teach, but when it comes to practice, then there's nothing doing. It's always a lot of blockheaded foolishness. There now, I've lost my snuffbox talking to you! Oh, plague take you! Darya, Darya!

DARYA (*comes in*): What do you want?

ANNA PETROVNA: What are you gawking about? Find my snuffbox!

(DARYA *goes out*.)

MILASHIN: You may scold me as much as you please; but why must Marya Andrevna pine away?

ANNA PETROVNA: Go along, I won't listen to you. She ought to know, I guess, what kind of a mother I am to her. What hasn't it cost me to bring her up! I must get some consolation out of her. That's enough crying!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Haven't I always been obedient, mamma? Have you ever been dissatisfied with me?

ANNA PETROVNA: What's the good of talking about the past? I don't want to think about it. It would be hard enough and no use in

it for me to remember when you obeyed me and when you didn't! Now I see your gratitude. Your mother, in her old age, knows no peace by day or by night; it's a woman's way; I'm all worn out. I found her a husband, such that even she isn't worth him; and she cries, and pines away, as if I were doing her an evil!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: But really, mamma, I'm agreed.

ANNA PETROVNA: Yes, I see how well agreed you are! (DARYA comes in.) What do you want now?

DARYA: Here's your snuffbox, ma'am.

ANNA PETROVNA: What are you here for? Fine time for you to come!

DARYA (*going*): Well, cackle away!

ANNA PETROVNA: Any one else would be glad, and wouldn't know how to thank her mother for such a husband, and not try to upset her. I'm only a woman, I'm an ignorant woman; but you don't care a bit. You don't even think about your mother, how you might make her happy.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Mamma! For God's sake! What are you saying! (*She weeps.*) Good Heavens, what does this mean!

ANNA PETROVNA (*becoming calmer after a brief silence*): Well, well, of course, I can't complain of you, you've always obeyed me.— But what's the matter with you now, Mashenka! Now, that'll do; stop! Why, I'm sorry for you myself. I have hurt you!— What shall I do; forgive me! I'm a woman, you see; my heart is weak and hasty, it boils over; sometimes I can't control it. You're to blame yourself for driving me to it. Sometimes I say something hastily.— It's a sin to be offended at me for that; it's a woman's way!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I'm not offended at you.—

ANNA PETROVNA: What's to be done; good or bad, all the same I'm your mother. You'll get married, and you won't have me any more. Well, that's enough, my dear. Do you think it's pleasant for me to watch you cry? God be with you, what makes you?

(*All the personages are to the left of the stage. HORKOV comes in and stops in the middle of the stage.*)

SCENE XII

The same and HORKOV

HORKOV: Marya Andrevna! My mother insulted you; I've come to ask forgiveness for her.

ANNA PETROVNA: Yes, my dear, I must say your mother is a good woman.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA (*softly*): Mamma, he seems to be drunk. Don't say anything, please.

MILASHIN (*to* MARYA ANDREYEVNA): This is the fourth day he's been drinking; he went straight away from you and started in. He just walks about the room, weeps, and drinks.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Really? Ah, poor fellow!

HORKOV: What's this? Tears! What are you crying about? I didn't want to hurt you—I would die for you, Marya Andrevna. That's my mother—she's a simple woman. I didn't know she had been at your house, I didn't know—I wouldn't have allowed her to come to you.— She's a simple woman, and understands nothing.— How should she understand! What's to be done! My mother—loves—she brought me up—Marya Andrevna, forgive me! (*He falls upon his knees.*)

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: What's the matter, what's the matter, Mikhaylo Ivanych? Get up! I'm not angry either at you or at your mother; on the contrary, I am very grateful to you for your attitude toward me.

HORKOV (*rising*): What are you crying about? Tell me, what are you crying about? Who has offended you?

ANNA PETROVNA: Ah, young man, young man!—

HORKOV: What's the matter, Anna Petrovna?— Ah, you don't know!— Then you'd better keep still! (*To* MARYA ANDREYEVNA.) Really, has your mother hurt you? Don't get angry at her—God be with her—she doesn't know—don't get angry at her—you see, she loves—brought you up—taught—

ANNA PETROVNA: Let's go, Mashenka, it's time to dress; soon Maxim Dorofeich will come. (*Softly to* MILASHIN.) Lead him away, Ivan Ivanych!

MILASHIN (*taking his hat*): Let's go, Mikhaylo Ivanych.

HORKOV: What? A kid!

MILASHIN: What are you cross about? I want to lead you out of here because you're drunk! (*HORKOV stands perplexed.*)

MARYA ANDREYEVNA (*rising*): Stop, Ivan Ivanych!

MILASHIN: Well, what's he cross about? That's annoying!

HORKOV: Yes, abominable, abominable! Pardon me—what am I good for! Drunk—in another's house!—

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Ah, how sorry I am for him; how sorry I am!

HORKOV: Marya Andrevna, don't despise me! I love you—I couldn't bear your refusal. Of course, it was foolish—low—improper.— But what shall I do? I'm a wretched man! I love you, you see; love you very much!—

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I love you myself, Mikhaylo Ivanych. I'm very sorry that I became acquainted with you so late. I am marrying—Benevolensky. (*She weeps.*)

HORKOV: Benevolensky!— This is a sacrifice—yes, a sacrifice. Well then, like a gentleman—like a gentleman—tears—

MARYA ANDREYEVNA (*sits down on a chair*): Ah, Mikhaylo Ivanych, this is painful, very painful to me!

ANNA PETROVNA: She's doing it for her mother. Maxim Dorofeich: a good man, and with property.

HORKOV: Yes, with property. Tears, tears—eternal tears—consumption, without life, without seeing any happiness in life—! Good-by! (*He falls upon his knees, takes MARYA ANDREYEVNA's hand and kisses it.*) I myself shall not survive it! (*MARYA ANDREYEVNA swoons; all bustle round about her; HORKOV weeps, leaning against the wall.*)

ACT V

The scene represents a medium-sized room. To the right of the spectators a door leading into the parlor; nearer to the spectators a pier glass. Rear center, a door leading into the hallway. To the left a couch, before the couch a round table; further off, another door; in the corner an ordinary table on which are cups and bottles. DARYA is placing bottles on the table; a BUTLER places cups on a tray, then takes the tray and goes to the door. DOBROTVORSKY comes in.

SCENE I

DARYA, the BUTLER, and DOBROTVORSKY

DOBROTVORSKY: What have you got there, my lad?

BUTLER: Tea, sir.

DOBROTVORSKY: Why didn't you bring along some rum?

BUTLER: First we take it around plain, sir.

DOBROTVORSKY: Bah, my boy! Don't you know whom to treat with what? Don't you see what important people we've got here, sitting with their brass buttons?

BUTLER: Darya Semenovna, some rum, please.

DARYA: What's the matter now? Oh, plague take you! Rum? What for?

BUTLER: They're asking for rum, ma'am. (*He takes a bottle and places it on the tray.*)

DOBROTVORSKY: Give me some too; I'll sit down here to one side, and have a sip of punch at my ease. (*He takes a cup and sits down on the*

couch. The BUTLER goes out through the door to the right. A woman comes in wearing a cape and a kerchief.)

THE WOMAN IN THE CAPE: Will there be dancing, my dear? My young mistress sent me to inquire. There's seven young ladies at our house, my dear. "Find out without fail," she says, "whether there'll be dancing: and if there is we'll come take a look."

DARYA: There will, there will. Oh, plague take you there! *(The WOMAN goes out. Several persons come in and proceed through the door to the right; a COACHMAN appears in the door.)*

DARYA: What are you after?

COACHMAN: To see the wedding.

DARYA: Oh, you lout, to sneak in here!

COACHMAN: What kind of a lady are you?

DARYA: None of your back talk! What are you bawling out your throat for?

COACHMAN: You talk more quietly, or maybe you'll scare me!

DARYA: I said, get out!

COACHMAN: I'm going. *(He goes out.)*

DARYA: Oh, plague take you! Confound it!

(She goes out. Several people come in and look through the door to the right. Among them are two women, fairly well dressed; a girl wearing a kerchief on her head; and two young men in blue ulsters.)

FIRST YOUNG MAN *(to the girl wearing the kerchief)*: Kindly point out which is the bridegroom, ma'am?

GIRL: There he is.

FIRST YOUNG MAN: Ah, yes. And where's the bride, ma'am?

GIRL: There she is.

FIRST YOUNG MAN: Ah, yes. Do you live far from here, ma'am?

GIRL: Just around the corner.

FIRST YOUNG MAN: I myself live only a tiny way off, ma'am. Just let me see you home.

GIRL: I know the way without your help.

SECOND YOUNG MAN *(to the FIRST YOUNG MAN)*: What! You flew with the ladle to the beer! *(To the GIRL.)* What are you listening to him for; he's famous with us for that sort of thing. *(To the FIRST YOUNG MAN.)* What are you up to, anyhow? There's nothing for you to get there! You've overshot the mark! *(To the GIRL.)* The other day he saw a girl home from town to Rogozhkaya Street, and there the porter drove him off with a broom. So he had his trip there and back on foot for nothing!

FIRST YOUNG MAN: That's enough lying, my boy!

SECOND YOUNG MAN: Who's lying! You're not up to this sort of

thing! You see what a fine young lady she is! Well, miss, do you live near here? *(They continue to talk in whispers. Two women, DUNYA and PASHA, come out of the crowd to the front of the stage.)*

PASHA: Haven't you really any regrets about him?

DUNYA: Regrets, nothing! What a life I've had. I've worn myself out! It used to be he'd come, drunk and raving just like he was off his head. I told him long since: "You set me free; if you should get married, I suppose you'd grow steady. If," says I, "you should take a pretty young lady, then perhaps you'd become a respectable person yourself; as it is you're just letting yourself go to pieces."

PASHA: Did you really now!

DUNYA: Sure, just like that, Pasha.

PASHA: Well, never mind now. Let's go look at the dowry.

DUNYA: Let's go, Pasha. *(They go out through the door to the left. The crowd disperses little by little; there remain a few old women. DOBROTVORSKY is drinking punch. MARYA ANDREYEVNA and BENEVOLENSKY come in.)*

SCENE II

DOBROTVORSKY, BENEVOLENSKY, and MARYA ANDREYEVNA

BENEVOLENSKY: Young lady, you have only to command, and I shall fulfill everything precisely.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Are you going to obey me in everything, Maxim Dorofeich?

BENEVOLENSKY: On the word of honor of a gentleman.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I tell you plainly there's one thing in your character that I don't like; I should like to have you leave off certain habits. On that condition I am marrying you. Will you obey me?

BENEVOLENSKY: Anything you please. I'm ready for anything out of love for you. You wanted me not to drink vodka, and I quit it; you told me not to take snuff, and now I don't. Ah, Platon Markych, you here? Come to see me sometime; I'm going to give you a silver snuffbox.

DOBROTVORSKY: I humbly thank you, Maxim Dorofeich; I'll drop in sometime.

BENEVOLENSKY: I'm your most humble servant for life. Permit me to kiss your little hand. Perhaps you would like to be left alone here?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Yes, I must have a talk with Platon Markych.

BENEVOLENSKY: I'll go, ma'am. You see how obedient I am. *(He goes up to PLATON MARKOVICH.)* Well, do I bear myself gracefully?

DOBROTVORSKY *(nodding his head approvingly)*: Finely! *(BENEVOLENSKY goes out.)*

SCENE III

MARYA ANDREYEVNA and DOBROTVORSKY

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Am I foolish, Platon Markych? Tell me. There now, am I not?

DOBROTVORSKY: What's the matter with you! Who dares say so? No, you're our clever little girl!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Listen, Platon Markych, to what has come into my head. Maybe it'll seem funny to you. I was thinking, thinking— Yes, do you know what I finally thought out? (DOBROTVORSKY *looks at her.*) Only don't you laugh at me!— It seemed to me that I was marrying him in order to reform him, to make a decent man of him. That's foolish, isn't it, Platon Markych? Of course, that's nonsense, it's impossible to do that, ha? Platon Markych, isn't it so? That's all childish dreams?

DOBROTVORSKY: Wild animals, even they can be tamed.—

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Without that thought, Platon Markych, it would be awfully hard for me. Now I live on that only. Help me keep up, Platon Markych.

DOBROTVORSKY: Do you know, young lady, I'll tell you a Russian proverb: "What will be, will be; but things will be as God wills." And another proverb says: "You can't escape fate, even on horseback."

(MARYA ANDREYEVNA *sits down on a chair near the pier glass and muses*; DARYA *comes in and drives off the stage the onlookers, who go out through door at the back.*)

SCENE IV

The same and DARYA

DARYA: Oh, plague take you! What are you doing here? If you want to look, then stay in the hall! But what is there to see? This is no miracle!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Fix my hair. (DOBROTVORSKY *goes out.*)

DARYA (*arranging her hair*): Miss, Vladimir Vasilyich is here in the garden.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Well, what of it?

DARYA: He asks permission to come in; he wants to have a talk with you.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: What on earth! Close that door. Call him in. (DARYA *goes out.*) Why has he come? I'll listen to what he says. Strange, how quickly I've ceased to love him. Now he seems to me like any one else. I await him without the least agitation. But before?

(MERICH *comes in.*)

SCENE V

MARYA ANDREYEVNA and MERICH

MARYA ANDREYEVNA (*without turning toward him*): What have you come for?

MERICH: To look at you for the last time. Do you refuse me that?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA (*turning around to him*): Do I look pretty?

MERICH: Enchanting!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Good-by, it's time I went to the groom.

MERICH: Ah, wait a bit, Marya Andrevna, for God's sake hear me out. Just let me at least admire you a few moments longer.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I'm listening. What do you want?

MERICH: Don't be angry with me, Marya Andrevna.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I'm not angry with you.

MERICH: You want to say that I'm not worth your getting angry at. Pardon me, I believe you didn't understand me rightly. I want to set myself straight before you.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Set yourself straight in what? I blame myself for everything. I thought you were a man capable of loving, and I was mistaken. I was seeking love; you, an intrigue and conquests. You and I aren't alike.

MERICH: I loved you sincerely, Marya Andrevna.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: That's not true, Vladimir Vasilyich! (*Reflecting.*) Say, if you please, whom are you deceiving? How do you manage it? All your conquests, probably, happen as it did in my case. It's the girl who throws herself on you, and then you boast of the conquest. Isn't that so? I should soon have ceased to love you, no matter how far our love might have gone. A little more suffering, repentance, shame, and all the same I'd have ceased to love you. I had such need of love! That was all I wished for.

MERICH: Oh, priceless woman!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Formerly, you wouldn't listen to me; now you will hear me out! How happy I should have been if I had been born frivolous-minded. I might have been occupied with dresses, with small intrigues, and everything might have been so easy and happy. I might have fallen in love, amused myself. Now I look at life differently: I'm going to get married, and I want to be a good wife.

MERICH: My God, how I have erred! I didn't know you, Marya Andrevna. I see now all the despicableness of my conduct.—

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I don't know whether you confess from your soul or not; but I believe you, I don't want to hurt you. I'm not angry

at you because of myself; I should wish only that this might serve you as a lesson. Let's part friends. (*She holds out her hand.*)

MERICH (*kissing her hand*): Mary, I love you!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: Too late, Vladimir Vasilyich, too late!— A new path lies before me, and I know what it's like in advance. I have before me much woman's work to do! They say he's coarse, uneducated, a bribe-taker; but that, it may be, came from his having no honest person beside him, no woman. They say a woman can do a great deal if she takes a notion to. Here is my obligation. And I feel that I have the strength. I shall make him love, honor, and obey me. And then—children. I shall live for the children. You smile! How honorable that is on your part! Even if everything that I say to you were only dreams that could never come to pass, nevertheless, you ought not to disenchant me. I need them to sustain me in my present position.— Ah, Vladimir Vasilyich, God forgive you!— There, it's hard for me—it's very hard for me, and no one is willing to recognize the fact.

MERICH: I wish you every happiness. But it seems to me that with such a man, it's impossible for you.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: No, Vladimir Vasilyich, it's not for you to see my sufferings. I'll not furnish you the pleasure of being sorry for me. No matter what the circumstances may be, I want to be happy; I want to, no matter what it may cost me. Why should I suffer? Consider yourself: well, consider! Because I made a mistake; because you deceived me pitilessly; finally, because I am fulfilling my duty and saving my mother.— No, no, no!—I shall be happy, I shall be loved!—Shan't I? Say—yes, yes!— Tell me! My need is so great; don't contradict me!—

MERICH (*upon reflection*): Yes!

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I humbly thank you. Good-by. (*She goes out.*)

MERICH (*alone*): What a clever girl! I should like to know what she thinks of me. Can she consider me a fickle man?— However, thank God it's ended as it has; if she had been more silly, I shouldn't have known how to get rid of her. There would have been no end to reproaches, and I might have had to marry her. (*MILASHIN comes in.*)

SCENE VI

MERICH and MILASHIN

MILASHIN: And you here!

MERICH: Yes, I came to say good-by to Mary. I loved her, Ivan

IVANYCH. I shan't conceal it from you; it's awfully painful for me to lose such a woman. Ah, how she loved me! And now just look at her: how much will power she has, how firmly she bears her sufferings! I alone know how she suffers. I don't talk about myself—I'm a man. Are you here for the evening?

MILASHIN: Yes.

MERICH: Do me the favor, if you see she's going to grieve very much, to comfort her: you'll oblige me greatly by doing so. And, if you please, try to do it in such a way that nothing may remind her of me. I depend on you, Ivan Ivanych. Good-by!— (*He goes out.*)

SCENE VII

MILASHIN *alone*

MILASHIN: Really, this is awful! The whole evening she hasn't said a single word to me; but she came here herself to say good-by to Merich. I've been walking around and pining for three hours at a stretch; if I could only have a single glance! This is awfully annoying. I wonder if my face isn't properly expressive? I should wish my face now to express the very deepest woe. (*He looks at the mirror.*) Bah! what an idiotic expression!—actually ridiculous! No, let her notice a malicious irony in my eyes. (*He looks at the mirror.*) But if she shouldn't take a notion to notice it!— Ah, but what am I fussing about?— Shall I go away? Of course she won't notice my absence. Ah, deuce take it!— No, I'll stay. I'll be an indifferent spectator. I'll look on coldly. And, in fact, what am I getting hot about? But how pretty she is to-day! How she bears herself! No, deuce take it, this is awfully annoying! And what cattle they all are around her! I suppose I'm out of sorts to-day. And that bridegroom, that bridegroom! And she's even petting him! No, she'll notice the kind of glances I'll cast at him. (*He goes out. Various people cross the stage to the door at the right. BENEVOLENSKY and DOBROTVORSKY come in, arm in arm.*)

SCENE VIII

BENEVOLENSKY and DOBROTVORSKY

BENEVOLENSKY: I'm grateful to you, Platon Markych, very grateful. You've obliged me very, very much. Marya Andrevna is clever and educated. I need just that kind of a wife.

DOBROTVORSKY: He, he, he! You old rascal! What's the use of talking now! They've landed the fine boy! No matter what she's

like, there's no backing out now!— I'm just joking, just joking!—

BENEVOLENSKY: Yes, sir; I'll tell you with such a woman I shan't be ashamed to appear in society. (*He stops before the mirror and strokes his chin.*) Well, do you think we look well together? What do you think about it?

DOBROTVORSKY: Oh, you rogue! (*He laughs.*) What nonsense you do think up!

BENEVOLENSKY: What are you laughing at?

DOBROTVORSKY: That's enough roguery for you; you'll make me die laughing. Kiss me! (*They exchange kisses.*)

BENEVOLENSKY (*aside*): What's he laughing at? (*To DOBROTVORSKY.*) Listen, Platon Markych, I have a serious matter to talk over with you.

DOBROTVORSKY: What do you want?

BENEVOLENSKY (*takes him by the arm*): We were all young once. (*DOBROTVORSKY nods his head in token of assent.*) Youth, as you know, has its weaknesses. You know that very well yourself; otherwise I shouldn't have begun to talk to you.

DOBROTVORSKY: We're all sinners, and we're all mortal.—

BENEVOLENSKY: That's true, but that isn't the question! You listen. Mistakes are very natural in youth. I loved a certain girl—

DOBROTVORSKY: Hm! Do tell! Was she a pretty girl?

BENEVOLENSKY: Far from homely. Well, to be sure, from the lower classes; but far from homely. Only her disposition absolutely did not correspond to her appearance: she was jealous.—

DOBROTVORSKY: That seems surprising to you. Ah, youth! Wait until you've lived as long as I have, and then you'll find out! Here, I'll tell you a fine story right off—just listen—not just like yours; but then, what things you do tell me! Besides, this happened before Napoleon came to Moscow.

BENEVOLENSKY: Ah, what a stupid you are, Platon Markych! I'm afraid that she'll come here!

DOBROTVORSKY: Who?

BENEVOLENSKY: Why, that girl.

DOBROTVORSKY: What for? No, what would she come for; what are you saying?

BENEVOLENSKY: Understand me, Platon Markych: I tell you she's jealous; and so I'm afraid that she'll make some kind of a fuss here.

DOBROTVORSKY: That's it! Ah!— Now I understand you.

BENEVOLENSKY: So you just arrange matters, my friend, so they won't let any strangers in.

DOBROTVORSKY: Why, my boy, what are you doing with my Marya Andrevna? You'll kill her for me, the darling. Now my boy, you just quit such foolishness!

BENEVOLENSKY: What's the matter, what's the matter with you! I quit it long ago. Only, carefulness won't hurt any, all the same. Do you understand me?

DOBROTVORSKY: All right, sir; now I understand. (*He goes out.*)

SCENE IX

BENEVOLENSKY *alone*

BENEVOLENSKY: In life the chief thing is sense and foresight. What was I, and what am I now? Here it is, the whole story! It used to be that I bowed to everybody I met, so that he might not beat me for something; and now you can't touch me with a ten-foot pole. I have capital, and I've found a pretty wife. Deuce take it! (*He clasps his hands in delight, then pulls his forelock.*) Oh, you little Maxim Benevolensky! Did you ever dream about this good fortune, when you sat in school in a ticking blouse? Not at all, my boy! Here (*tapping his forehead*), here's the way we make our road. Necessity gives birth to sense, and sense to money, and with sense and money you can do anything! (*Musing.*) Hadn't I better learn to dance?—I'll do it. Or is it useless? No, what for? It's out of place for a business man. But sometimes I do so want to dance a jig. (*He jumps about a little; various people come out of the parlor; he stops in a decorous pose, and thrusts his hand into his waistcoat. From the door to the left the FIRST and SECOND WOMEN, PASHA and DUNYA, come in.*)

DUNYA: Ah, Maxim Dorofeich, how do you do? My respects to you. (*BENEVOLENSKY turns aside.*) What's the matter with you; didn't you recognize me?

BENEVOLENSKY: Ah, is that you, Dunya? What did you—?

DUNYA: To take a look at your bride.

BENEVOLENSKY: But how on earth! Why, I wouldn't have permitted—

DUNYA: Why wouldn't you? You wouldn't let me in! Ah, you conscienceless man! You shameless-eyed—!

BENEVOLENSKY: No, I only— Why— Well, Dunya, go ahead and look. There's the bride, and there's the dowry.—

DUNYA: Well, well, look! I suppose I ought not to look at you at all! Here, Pasha, he's sending me off to look. You see how kind he is! He'll show me everything himself. Well, my dear, he's no stranger! Ah, you gay bird!

BENEVOLENSKY: You be more careful, Dunya—somebody might see—it'd be bad! (*He strikes a pose.*)

DUNYA: Do you want me to make a row right now?

BENEVOLENSKY: Fool, fool! What's the matter with you?

DUNYA: Never fear, never fear! What are you afraid of? I'm not your style.

BENEVOLENSKY: No, Dunya, that's enough, really. If you need anything, it'd be better for you to come to my house.

DUNYA: I shan't go to your house, don't worry!

BENEVOLENSKY: But what have you got to do here, Dunya? Take a look at the bride and get along!

DUNYA: I've seen her already. She's pretty, Pasha; I can say that she's pretty. (*To BENEVOLENSKY.*) Only will you know how to live with a woman like her? Look out that you don't destroy another's life for nothing. It'd be a sin for you. Come to your senses, and live properly. It wasn't so with me: we lived, we lived for a while, and then you skipped. (*She wipes her eyes.*)

PASHA: But you said you had no regrets.

DUNYA: Oh, I loved him then. What of it? We have to part sometime: one can't live like that all one's life. It's a good thing he's getting married; I suppose he'll lead a decent life now. All the same, Pasha, just realize, we lived five years—really, it's a shame. Of course, I got a little good out of him—*more tears*—what have I borne in shame alone! And so, my youth passed all for nothing, and there's nothing to show for it.

PASHA: What's to be done, Dunya!

DUNYA: It used to be I was wildly happy over him, whenever he came. Take care you live decently!

BENEVOLENSKY: Why yes, of course.

DUNYA: All right then. She's yours forever, and not like me. Well, good-by; don't bear me any ill will; there's no reason for any good will. What have I been crying about anyhow, fool that I am! Oh, let's forget it, Pasha; and hang grief with a rope!

BENEVOLENSKY: Good-by, Dunya!

DUNYA: Addu, m'su! Let's go, Pasha. (*They go out.*)

BENEVOLENSKY: Mad woman! Still it's fortunate it happened this way. However I almost knuckled down. (*The BUTLER comes in.*) Just give me a glass of sherry, my boy. Faugh! Just like a mountain off my shoulders! (*The BUTLER brings the wine.*) Thank you, my lad. (*He goes out.*)

(*Various people appear on the scene. TWO WOMEN are talking.*)

FIRST WOMAN: Now they say, "Don't be envious!" How can you help being envious! One daughter, and for her they land such a fine

young fellow; but here I have three, and can't get 'em off my hands. Do as you please! Well, I suppose they entangled the young fellow somehow or other; otherwise why should he marry her? She must have absolutely nothing.

SECOND WOMAN: Well, my dear, you've found a great one to envy.

FIRST WOMAN: Why?

SECOND WOMAN: Why, they say he's such a gay bird, that it's a shame.

(TWO OLD WOMEN *are talking.*)

FIRST OLD WOMAN: The trunks are bound with iron, but most likely they're empty.

SECOND OLD WOMAN: Oh, no, full.

FIRST OLD WOMAN: How so? You could carry around everything they have on your little finger.

SECOND OLD WOMAN: You haven't been prying into other people's trunks, have you?

FIRST OLD WOMAN: I don't pry—maybe others do.

SECOND OLD WOMAN: You can only criticize; but what did they give with the girl herself?

FIRST OLD WOMAN: More than they did with you!

SECOND OLD WOMAN: Who steals wood in other people's yards?

FIRST OLD WOMAN: You lie, I don't steal!

SECOND OLD WOMAN: But you do that!

FIRST OLD WOMAN: Oh, you! (*They disappear in the crowd. From the door to the right ANNA PETROVNA, DOBROTVORSKY and DARYA come in.*)

SCENE X

ANNA PETROVNA, DOBROTVORSKY and DARYA

ANNA PETROVNA: I'm utterly worn out to-day, I haven't any more strength. Let's sit down and rest. (*She sits down on the couch.*)

DOBROTVORSKY: What of it, they're your own worries, madam. "Your own burden doesn't hurt you," says the proverb. You've arranged everything splendidly.

ANNA PETROVNA: How happy I am, Platon Markych. You can't imagine! Indeed, it's time for me to have some rest. I'm a weak, ignorant woman. I've had to deny myself in everything. But, of course, when my husband, now at rest, was living, I was spoiled in every way.

DOBROTVORSKY: You were coddled and pampered, Anna Petrovna.

ANNA PETROVNA: And I'll tell you, Platon Markych, how I always loved weddings. You don't have to feed me, if there's a wedding anywhere. I'll feast on that. And now God has willed that I should

marry off my daughter. I didn't expect ever to live to see such joy. How many times I've dreamed of it in my sleep! And then I often dream that I'm dancing, dancing, how I do dance! You see, I was a great dancer when I was a girl. And once it seemed to me as if I were drunk, absolutely drunk, and I was having words with you enough to make your hair curl.

DOBROTVORSKY: A lucky sign, madam.

ANNA PETROVNA: Yes, thank God, everything is settled now.

DOBROTVORSKY: Thank God, thank God!

ANNA PETROVNA: Dasha, just give us some kind of wine. Platon Markych and I'll take a drink to our happiness.

(DARYA brings a bottle and glasses on a tray and places it on the table.)

DOBROTVORSKY (*drinks*): I have the honor to drink to your health, Anna Petrovna. God grant you may live to see grandchildren and great-grandchildren.

ANNA PETROVNA: I humbly thank you, Platon Markych. We're obliged to you for all these things, my friend. (MARYA ANDREYEVNA comes in.)

SCENE XI

The same and MARYA ANDREYEVNA

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: You here, mamma? I'm looking for you. (*She goes up to her mother.*)

ANNA PETROVNA: What's the matter, darling; what is it?

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: I feel rather ill somehow, mamma. (*Sits down on the couch and leans her head against her mother.*)

DOBROTVORSKY (*taking a glass*): What's the use, young lady? You must get used to it! To your health! Be rich, and then don't forget us! He, he, he! Your little hand please, young lady. (*He kisses her hand.*)

ANNA PETROVNA (*drinks*): Well, little girl, be happy; don't bear any grudge against your old mother. You'll live a few years, and then you'll find out yourself what children are like. (*She kisses her.*) Do you like him? I must admit the thing was done pretty quickly. Who knows? You can't tell what he's like.—

MARYA ANDREYEVNA (*in tears*): I like him so-so, mamma. Never mind my crying; that's just because I'm nervous. I think I'll be happy.—

A VOICE FROM THE CROWD: Some husbands are fussy, my dear, and like to have you please 'em. Of course, they'll come home drunk most of the time; and then they like to have you tend to 'em yourself, and won't allow any one else near 'em.

MARYA ANDREYEVNA: But if I shouldn't be happy, it won't be your fault; you've done everything for me that you could; all that you knew how. I thank you, mamma, and you, Platon Markych. (*From the other room music is heard. BENEVOLENSKY comes in; MARYA ANDREYEVNA goes to meet him and gives him her hand.*)

DOBROTVORSKY (*offering his arm to ANNA PETROVNA*): And you and I, madam, let's dance the polka. (*They go out.*)

ONE OF THE PEOPLE: Well, is that the bride?

AN OLD WOMAN: That's she, my dear, that's she.

A WOMAN: How she cries, poor dear.

THE OLD WOMAN: Yes, my friend, she is poor: he's taking her for her beauty.

A BITTER FATE

A Drama in Four Acts

By ALEXEY FEOFILAKTOVICH PISEMSKY

(1859)

*Translated by Alice Kagan
and George Rapall Noyes*

CHARACTERS

CHEGLÓV-SOKÓVIN, *a young landowner*

SERGÉY VASÍLYICH ZOLOTÍLOV, *his brother-in-law, a middle-aged landowner and district marshal of the nobility*

KALISTRÁT GRIGÓRYICH, *bailiff of CHEGLOV-SOKOVIN*

ANÁNY YÁKOVICH, *peasant-tenant of SOKOVIN, trading in St. Petersburg*

LIZAVÉTA, *his wife*

MATRÉNA,* *her mother*

ANNA SPIRIDÓNYEVNA, *an old neighbor of MATRENA*

UNCLE NÍKON, *an old peasant-laborer*

SHPRÍNGEL, *an official of the provincial government, on special service*

DISTRICT CHIEF OF POLICE

A LAWYER

A POLICEMAN

A HIRED WOMAN

PEASANTS: MIKHÁYLO FÉDOROV,† *their deputy*; DAVID IVÁNOV; FÉDOR‡
PETROVICH; *a young boy; a lame peasant; a pock-marked peasant;*
witnesses; women

The action takes place in the village of Sokóvina

* Pronounced, Ma-tryó'na.

‡ Pronounced, Fyó'dor.

† Pronounced, Fyó'do-roff.

A BITTER FATE

ACT I

A comfortable peasant cottage. In the front corner is a table covered with a white cloth. On the table are bread, salt, and a small ikon.

SCENE I

OLD MATRENA is sitting on one bench and old SPIRIDONYEVNA on another.

SPIRIDONYEVNA (*looking out of the window*): They're not in sight yet, my dear; not yet.

MATRENA: What can you expect, my dear? The road's drifted and the horse has to struggle all the time. They have to go at a walk, I suppose.

SPIRIDONYEVNA: Who went to meet him, my dear?

MATRENA: Who went to meet him? We hired a horse and wagon, my dear; Uncle Nikon, bless his soul, was glad to go for twenty-five kopeks and a drink of beer. I don't know what I'd have done without him. My own scamp of a laborer went to the mill week before last and ain't come back yet.

SPIRIDONYEVNA: How about Lizaveta, my dear? Did she go too?

MATRENA: Yes. She's his wife—it was her duty to go: what else could she do but go and meet him. . . . O Lord, O Lord! . . . What sinners we are! What a world this is!

SPIRIDONYEVNA (*grinning*): She must be awfully afraid of him, my dear?

MATRENA: Of course she's afraid of him! He's such a proud man and he's always had his own way. . . . You know as well as I that he wouldn't mind even his own father. He left a rich and comfortable home, and came to live with us poor folks so that no one could boss him; and now that he's got a start on his own account, I suppose he thinks more of himself than ever.

SPIRIDONYEVNA: And why shouldn't he? Perhaps he thinks he's higher up in the world than a merchant. Some of the peasants were telling me how he lived in Peter: * among his own sort he really can't find any one good enough for him. . . . When he comes to the tavern

* Popular name for St. Petersburg.

for tea, he won't even notice a peasant of his own class if he looks a little shabby. Pride, my dear, is our worst enemy. . . . Who can tell? Maybe that's why God's punishing him now. How can we ever tell him such a terrible thing!

MATRENA: Yes, such a terrible thing. . . . He may not even spare her life. I've cried and cried over the hussy, until my eyes almost went dry. . . . "Suppose," says I to her, "Anany Yakovlich all of a sudden comes from Peter, how can we ever tell him of your doings, you wretch?" "Well," says she, "mother dear, you needn't worry about it. It's my sin and I'll take what comes to me."

SPIRIDONYEVNA: And what about the child, my dear? He seems to have dropped through the floor.

MATRENA: She took him to a room outside. She and the hired woman were heating the place all day yesterday; she never said a word to me about it. I guess she did it so the baby wouldn't stare Anany Yakovlich in the face.

SPIRIDONYEVNA: I guess he knows about it already. . . . He must've heard it in Peter: good news travels slowly, but bad news spreads like wildfire.

MATRENA: Not much, my dear, not much! Whenever any of our people went to town, I begged them on my knees not even to mention it. It's dangerous, you know. He's still young, and if such bad news had come to him in Peter he might have lost his mind. Wretch that she is, she didn't spare my old age or his young life.

SPIRIDONYEVNA: Well, my dear, you can wash your hands clean of it. She's a young woman still. If she'd been naked and starving she might have been after money: but she had everything a heart desires and plenty of it.

MATRENA: What have we come to? People are awfully wicked nowadays, both men and women. When I was young, I was all alone here without Ivan Petrovich. He used to stay away for seven years at a time in Peter. . . . All those years I lived almost as poor as a beggar. In the summer I worked hard and in the winter I looked after the cattle and the spinning; and when I lay down at night I was so tired I couldn't feel my own bones—how could I think of such evil doings!

SPIRIDONYEVNA: That's what it is, my dear. If you don't sin against God, you aren't guilty before the tsar. I too was a sinner when I was a young girl. . . . I committed a crime, but that was different: it was just with my own kind, but she's carried on with the squire. (How could she have the nerve!) To my mind it's a sin even to talk to them!

MATRENA (*waving her hand*): I don't even know which of them said the first word. . . . And now I've grown old and stupid. . . .

That sickness I had in the fall has made me very forgetful; but I do remember how he came to our hut for the first time. . . . I was lying down on the oven bench just then; I jumped up. "Good day, master!" says I. Lizaveta was working about the stove all the while. "Good day, old woman," says he. Then he went straight over to her. "With hands like yours, Lizaveta," says he, "you ought to embroider with gold thread and not meddle with a fire-rake. How charming you are!" says he. She, the wretch, just stood there and grinned at him. . . . And I, old fool that I was, made him a bow too. "We thank you, dear master, for your kind words," says I. . . . The devil knows; maybe it all started then!

SPIRIDONYEVNA: Don't fool yourself, my dear, they found many a place outside your hut. Do you remember last harvest we went to help the master; and he used to be all day long on the plot of land where Lizaveta worked and he talked to her all the time?

MATRENA (*waving her hands in despair*): Just so.

SPIRIDONYEVNA (*continuing*): Then the people began to just fool around and drink a bit. The girls and young married women—hussies that they are—had plenty of work to do, but that wasn't enough for them . . . they began to sing and play tag. What do you suppose? The master began to play with them. He jumped around like a goat and he always chose Lizaveta for his partner and took good care that no one else should catch her. Then we all kept wondering: "Why's the master so sweet on Matrena's Lizaveta?" That's what we said.

MATRENA: My dear, I never knew a word about this. Mothers, I suppose, are just blind to the evil in their own children. If she'd lived with a cross mother-in-law instead of her own mother, she wouldn't have dared to do such a thing. Perhaps it's not all her fault, either; maybe some one else just led her on to it.

SPIRIDONYEVNA: There's one man, my dear, our bailiff, the villain that he is, Kalistrat Grigoryich: the whole village is talking about it and you can't stop their mouths, either. Who else could have set the squire on a married woman? And now for his favors and kindness he's got such power over the squire that it's amazing: the manor servants say that on holidays he comes in drunk and filthy from some place or other and instead of keeping out of sight of the gentlefolk, he yells at the top of his voice: "I don't care," says he, "the master's like a younger brother to me. He'll do whatever I want him to." It's just as if he'd cast a spell on him, my dear—honest it is.

MATRENA: Well, my dear, that's a queer kind of a spell! He's a clever man: rich and cunning. When this awful thing happened to that daughter of mine, he came to me and says: "Matrena," says he, "your daughter is with child and her husband has been away all this

time; you look out that she does nothing rash to herself or to the child—you'll have to answer for it." And I just groaned, in surprise, my dear; I never dreamed of such an awful thing. Just then the wretch came in. I began to scold her and was ready to tear her to pieces, but he began to yell at me. "Don't touch her," says he, "the master himself knows about it and he's excused her."

SPIRIDONYEVNA (*looking out of the window*): They're coming, my dear, they're coming.

MATRENA: Oh, praised be the Heavenly Queen! Shall we stand up? We had better meet them with bread and salt. (*She takes the bread from the table and stands in front of the door.*)

SPIRIDONYEVNA (*continuing to look out of the window*): Anany Yakovlich is sitting beside Lizaveta, my dear. Just look, he is helping her out of the cart so gently: bless his soul, I don't think he knows it yet.

SCENE II

ANANY YAKOVLICH *comes in*. *He is dressed in a short warm coat of good cloth; after him come LIZAVETA and UNCLE NIKON, who carries a bag on his shoulder.*

UNCLE NIKON: Here, my dear, I've brought you a real merchant from Peter. . . . My horse is fine: load her up with two tons and she'll haul it just the same—sure she will.

(ANANY YAKOVLICH *says a prayer before the ikon; makes three low bows to his mother-in-law; then, after bending over the ikon, exchanges kisses with her.*)

MATRENA: Good day, my dear, my bright star!

UNCLE NIKON: Make a low bow to me, too, my friend Anany Yakovlich: I want to have the honor too. (*He takes the bread and salt from MATRENA.*)

ANANY YAKOVLICH (*with a slight smile*): It won't hurt me! (*He makes a half bow to UNCLE NIKON and then exchanges kisses with him.*)

UNCLE NIKON: That's it, my boy, that's fine. . . . You must always respect us old folks. . . . It's the wisdom of old age that the world rests on and not on seven whales—it sure does.

ANANY YAKOVLICH (*to his wife*): Come, you take some too!

(LIZAVETA, *embarrassed, takes the bread and salt; ANANY YAKOVLICH makes her a low bow and kisses her.*)

MATRENA (*giving her daughter a nudge*): Why don't you make him a low bow, you fool?

(LIZAVETA makes a bow; ANANY YAKOVLICH raises her and kisses her again.)

SPIRIDONYEVNA (*affectedly*): Good day, my dear Anany Yakovlich—how swell and fine you've become! How are you?

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Oh, all right; I've nothing to complain of. (To UNCLE NIKON.) Let's have that bag for a moment, please.

UNCLE NIKON (*throwing the bag off his shoulder*): Here you are, take your old gunny sack! Now come quick, all of you, young and old; there's a present for every one.

ANANY YAKOVLICH (*takes out of the bag a lady's shawl and gives it to MATRENA*): Here, that's for you.

MATRENA (*kisses him on the elbow*): Oh, oh! Thank you, my dear, my precious darling!

SPIRIDONYEVNA: Now, my dear, you have a real fine shawl that just suits an old woman. It'll be becoming; it's just the thing for you.

MATRENA: Oh, my dear, my dear! Just look how he dresses me up and makes me look grand; and I, old fool that I am, don't even know how to thank him properly.

ANANY YAKOVLICH (*takes out of the bag a piece of silk stuff and gives it to his wife*): Here, that's for you!

(LIZAVETA silently takes her husband's hand and kisses it.)

SPIRIDONYEVNA (*looks enviously at LIZAVETA's gift*): Just look what grand things: we never saw anything like 'em here. Hm, he's brought her some velvet too for trimming—you'll be a regular doll, all dressed up in silks and velvet.

ANANY YAKOVLICH (to SPIRIDONYEVNA): I'm sorry, but I didn't expect to find you here. . . . Just let me make my compliments with a half ruble. (*He gives her half a ruble.*)

SPIRIDONYEVNA: Oh, my dear, my dear! . . . I thank you very, very much. (*She kisses his hand.*)

UNCLE NIKON: But why didn't you bring me a red hat? Now that ain't very nice of you, my friend—honest it ain't!

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Nowadays people have grown smarter and don't need a red hat to understand a man.

SPIRIDONYEVNA: That's just the point, sir! Maybe they see right through him, what kind of a man he is.

MATRENA (to her son-in-law): Take a seat at the table, my boy. . . . (To her daughter.) You go and take out of the stove whatever there is. (To SPIRIDONYEVNA.) Anna Spiridonyevna, you stay and eat dinner with us, my dear. (To UNCLE NIKON.) Come, you old devil you, stop getting in the way like a scarecrow. Get in the front place there.

UNCLE NIKON (*sits down*): There; I've sat down, my dear! . . .

I've brought you some vodka. . . . I sure have. Your rascally Anashka from Peter is a tightwad. He loosened up for one glass and thought it was enough. "No, my friend," says I, "quit your kidding. With Aunt Matrena's cake we'll have to have another drop!" (*He takes a half-pint bottle out of his pocket and strokes it gently.*) Here is my blessed drink! . . . Get us some cups and glasses!

MATRENA (*takes some small glasses out of the closet*): Drink it out of small glasses—vodka is too dear nowadays.

ANANY YAKOVLIKH (*to his wife*): Come, you sit down too! Tell her, mother dear, to sit down! It's a long time since we've sat beside each other.

MATRENA (*to her daughter*): Sit down!

UNCLE NIKON (*fills his glass and drinks without waiting for the others*): Your health I cherish, for thirst I perish: could you give me a copper to make my soul proper?

MATRENA (*to SPIRIDONYEVNA*): Anna Spiridonyevna, take a drink, my dear!

SPIRIDONYEVNA: Oh, no, my dear, I don't feel like drinking.

MATRENA: Come on, just try a little; maybe you'll like it.

SPIRIDONYEVNA (*drinks*): My dear, I haven't drunk since last Assumption Day. You take a drink too, my honored hostess!

MATRENA: Oh, no, no, I don't drink. (*To her son-in-law.*) Won't you have a drink too, my son, before a taste of bread and salt?

ANANY YAKOVLIKH: No, thanks; I'm not in the habit of drinking.

UNCLE NIKON: Lizunka here will take a drink, because . . . because she is happy that her husband has come home . . . she can welcome him more joyfully. Vodka, you know, warms a person up—it sure does!

ANANY YAKOVLIKH: Why should she drink? What nonsense you talk; it makes a man tired to listen to you.

SPIRIDONYEVNA: Anany Yakovlich, what way did you come, my dear; by way of Vologda?

ANANY YAKOVLIKH: Oh, no, that road ain't used very much any more; it's almost deserted. Nowadays the train carries people—three thousand at a time, and it flies like a bird: it runs about twenty miles an hour.

MATRENA and SPIRIDONYEVNA (*together*): Oh, my dear, what are you saying? It can't be true!

ANANY YAKOVLIKH: That's not so fast. . . . It's because a train is something new here; they're afraid to make it run faster. But in other lands it runs even faster. It's a big time-saver nowadays . . . and then it gives more profit on food supplies. And it don't wear you

out either; you sit there, just like in a room; it don't shake you and don't throw you out. It's a wonderful thing!

UNKLE NIKON: I know it, my friend . . . I've seen one myself . . . it carries a thousand people now. . . . It was a great big contraption like a house . . . and was pulled only by four horses, it really was, because the road was so smooth. . . . It runs on a paved road. . . .

ANANY YAKOVLIKH (*lowering his eyes a bit*): It has no horses at all . . . not even one . . . if there is a horse, then the train carries it. . . . You must've seen a stagecoach: a train is something different; it runs by steam.

SPIRIDONYEVNA: Good Lord, what do you mean by steam, my dear? All the steam we know about is in the bathhouse and what we scald pots with!

MATRENA: People can do everything nowadays.

UNCLE NIKON: I know, my friend, what you're talking about now and I know the other thing too. . . . And you just grunt, "Oh, ooh, oh!" . . . you just marvel at all that. . . . Just like women, that's all! Mityushka the blacksmith explained it all very plainly to me; it's not steam that comes out, but an unclean spirit! . . . It really is, because it fairly neighs when it starts: it's hard to get it going at first, don't you see. That shows you that the Germans have made the devil himself do their work. "Here," they say, "try this, Satan—make it run!"

SPIRIDONYEVNA: Oh, stop that, why do you talk of the devil so much? It's not fit talk for the table.

UNCLE NIKON: You're sure right, pug-nose! What d'you think? I know more than he does. . . . What does he show off so much for?

ANANY YAKOVLIKH (*with dignity*): There's no devil at all, and can't be any. And those sails they used to use on the sea are all out of style nowadays, because steam does the business so much better. They just calmly put a machine into the middle of the ship and it turns the wheels; and no matter what a big storm there is, it makes no difference. When a storm begins to rise, they make a stronger fire and just jump from wave to wave.

MATRENA: You and I, Spiridonyevna, my dear, will live our life through and never see anything new.

SPIRIDONYEVNA: Oh, how shall we ever come to see anything new, my dear; we can only sit and stare at poplars and birches. But Lizaveta, she'll surely go to Peter with her husband, and she'll see everything.

ANANY YAKOVLIKH: Why not? Maybe this year I'll take her there. Instead of hiring a cook, I'll have one of my own.

LIZAVETA (*flaring up*): What'd I do in Peter, my master? I'm

a village woman and have never been anywhere; I can't even look like city folks, let alone talk like they do.

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Don't think so little of yourself! I know Peter well enough and I know you won't be one of the worst ones there. Maybe you'll be one of the best? That's my opinion anyhow, because I think so much of you.

UNCLE NIKON: Anashka, you take me to Peter, honestly! Because . . . I can get all the necessary documents. I was born in the village, but was baptized in Peter—I sure was. That's what the squire says to me: "Nikashka," says he, "why do you waste your old bones here on hand labor, you old good-for-nothing? Why don't you go to Peter?" "Give me a thousand rubles, your Honor," says I. "What can I do now without money? What articles or fashions can I get without cash? . . . Can't do a thing!"

ANANY YAKOVLICH: In Peter they don't need your money to waste in taverns. (*To SPIRIDONYEVNA.*) And now about the steam, Anna Spiridoniyevna. . . .

SPIRIDONYEVNA: Yes, yes, my dear, my precious one, tell me something good: it's a pleasure to hear your wise stories.

ANANY YAKOVLICH: You can't find one factory without it. In old times you'd need about two thousand hands in a factory where now only one machine does the work. That one machine turns all the looms and wheels: it scares you when you look at it. There are only about twenty people fussing about the place, and that's mostly to keep it clean.

UNCLE NIKON: Anashka, you just said machine, but what is a machine?

ANANY YAKOVLICH (*not paying any attention to him*): All that worries the government now is that this machine uses such an awful lot of wood . . . that the forests'll give out. . . . So they've found a kind of soil—marshy places—with all kinds of roots and stumps. . . . All this is pressed and dried and then it'll burn! They bring coal from foreign lands and that also helps out the forests a great deal.

UNCLE NIKON: You don't know what a machine is, because you're a tradesman—only a mechanic knows those things. Now tell me, d'you know Nicholas of the Sea?

ANANY YAKOVLICH (*smiling*): Of course I know it, that's a famous church.

UNCLE NIKON: Now look here, I myself plastered the steeple on it. Now the machine wasn't in good shape, so down I went . . . I fell some three hundred feet. . . . There was a military man there and he said: "Bring the beggar to his senses!" Soon they brought me to, and he gave me two bottles of vodka, so I drank it.

SPIRIDONYEVNA: How is it you didn't break in pieces, you old devil you, when you fell from such a height?

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Did you measure that distance carefully? I think when a man falls three hundred feet, he don't want vodka after that.

UNCLE NIKON: Oh, the devil! Really? He won't drink any, eh? Well, I did and I'll take a drink now too—I sure will! (*He drinks.*) And when we were building the cornice, in the drawing room with the twin windows, of the house of the commander-in-chief, Count Miloradych, everything we had to do was way up in the air. And when I measured everything with my eyes, then I just fixed it. It came out straight.

ANANY YAKOVLICH: You led the band in every kind of business as far as I can make out?

UNCLE NIKON: I certainly did. . . . And now you tell me, who is the better man, a workman or a merchant? Now I'll tell you about my own case in my own way. . . . And now, what is a tradesman? A tradesman . . . well, he buys a piece of meat for half a kopek and sells it for ten. . . . So a tradesman is a swindler!

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Why do you slander all tradesmen? We have a place in the world too. If you fool somebody once, he won't come back to you a second time.

UNCLE NIKON: No, he won't! What is a merchant then, tell me? A soap bubble! You stick a finger into it—bang, it's gone! But a workman! . . . If Count Miloradych wants to have a carriage built or a suit made or some presents for his wife—the workman must be on hand. He'll get the order, "Come to the palace!" and there he goes.

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Oh, that's not so! A tradesman has always to be more careful than a workman. In our peddling trade we don't even have Christmas Day off; we're always in the eyes of the public. But how about the workman? He works six days and on the seventh he rolls round in a tavern behind a keg of vodka.

UNCLE NIKON: No, no, that ain't so. Here, I'm a workman, but a woman can't fool me—fiddlesticks!

(*All the women turn pale; UNCLE NIKON reaches out for vodka.*)

SPIRIDONYEVNA (*not giving him any*): Oh, come, come now, you've had enough already, you rascal you: you don't know what you're saying any more.

MATRENA: It's time you went home, old man. . . . You must be tired from the road. You'll get nothing more to eat, excuse me for saying so!

UNCLE NIKON (*without paying attention to any one*): I have a hut

full of kids, thank God, and they're all my own, all Nikon's, just exactly so—they sure are! But a tradesman, maybe . . . maybe the tradesman knows that good luck comes from the masters. He might even make some extra money that way.

ANANY YAKOVLICH: What are you driving at? You're saying something mighty queer.

(LIZAVETA and MATRENA sit as if half-dead.)

SPIRIDONYEVNA: Oh, what a tittle-tattle of a man you are! You're sitting at the master's table and eating his bread and drinking his vodka—and do nothing but fling insults at him, fool that you are!

UNCLE NIKON: What d'you mean I'm sitting? I'll get up. (*He gets up from the table.*) Why is he stirring up my temper? What kind of a man is he anyhow, if I can put him out of countenance with one word?

ANANY YAKOVLICH: What's the word that can put me out of countenance?

UNCLE NIKON: What word, eh? What are you, a merchant or a general? . . . You're the squire's kinsman—that's all you are. . . . Tell me whose baby have you! Tell me! . . . You're lucky only because your mare was harnessed to the squire's sleigh—that's all, cursed devils that you are! (*Goes out.*)

SCENE III

As before, without UNCLE NIKON

ANANY YAKOVLICH (*hastily rising from the table*): O Lord, thy will be done! (*To LIZAVETA.*) Why did this man mock you and slander you with such words?

SPIRIDONYEVNA (*alarmed*): I think I'd better be going now. Good day, Matrena, dear! . . . Good day, Lizaveta Ivanovna! . . . Good day, my dear Anany Yakovlich.

ANANY YAKOVLICH (*hastily*): Good day!

(SPIRIDONYEVNA *goes out.*)

ANANY YAKOVLICH (*to MATRENA*): Mother dear, what did his words mean?

MATRENA (*after a moment of silence*): Well, my dear, you heard for yourself.

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Whose baby was he yarning about?

MATRENA: Maybe he meant Lizaveta's little one.

ANANY YAKOVLICH (*turning pale*): What Lizaveta's little one?

MATRENA: She has a little boy. . . . He's about a month and a half now. . . .

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Oh, that's what it is, eh? . . . (To MATRENA.) Now, mother dear, please leave us alone for a while.

MATRENA: Be merciful to her, my dear, just a little bit. Punish her as much as you want! Beat her up so hard that she'll be sore for a year or more, but don't kill her. It's not for her sake, wretch that she is, but for your own, because you're so honest and clever. (*She makes him a low bow.*)

ANANY YAKOVLICH (*raising her*): Don't, that's all right. . . . Only please, leave us alone.

SCENE IV

ANANY YAKOVLICH and LIZAVETA

(*Some time passes in silence; ANANY YAKOVLICH looks LIZAVETA in the face; she lowers her eyes to the floor.*)

ANANY YAKOVLICH: What have you been up to, eh?

(LIZAVETA is silent.)

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Speak! Give me some sort of answer!

LIZAVETA: What can I say? . . . There is no reply I can make. You can do with me whatever you please.

ANANY YAKOVLICH (*laughing bitterly*): Hm. . . . I can do whatever I please. (*Assuming an air of dignity.*) Who was your lover, then?

LIZAVETA: Nikon Semenyich told you. Well, what he said was true.

ANANY YAKOVLICH: I didn't understand his stupid words! (*Silence again.*) He talked some stuff about the squire.

LIZAVETA: Who did you think, then? It was the squire.

ANANY YAKOVLICH: So that's what it's come to, eh? . . . You got into high society, didn't you?

LIZAVETA: I didn't want to do it: but then they gave me all sorts of orders and commands and I couldn't disobey.

ANANY YAKOVLICH: What sort of orders and commands could they be? If what you say is true and you were forced to do it—how about your mother? She wouldn't have agreed to such a thing. You should have told her about it right away.

LIZAVETA: Mother didn't know anything about it. I was ashamed to tell her. It would only have made her angry. What help could she have given me?

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Oh, you sly cat! If you thought your mother couldn't help you, why didn't you write me about it? This affair is so near my heart and causes me so much pain, that I might even have dropped everything in Peter and have come here as quick as lightning to save my honor. . . . No matter how powerful the masters are

nowadays, in that respect they're not any better than the rest of us. There's some justice in our country. If he had become very hard on us I might even have complained to the government. So why blame it on being afraid of the master, you cat? As if you didn't want to do it yourself, you shameless creature!

LIZAVETA (*begins to weep*): I'm not blaming anything on anybody. But how was I to know anything, living out here in the country the way I did? They began to frighten me and to threaten that they'd destroy our whole family; that they'd exile us; and you, a man like you, they were going to put in the army. So I thought, instead of breaking up the whole family, I'd rather suffer alone.

ANANY YAKOVLICH (*pounding himself on the chest*): At least hold your tongue, you viper! Don't make me still more angry with your silly stories! . . . I haven't enough courage to speak to you more properly now. Even if the thing had happened that you were afraid of when you felt sorry for me, I could have stood that much better than this. People manage to live even in exile; at least I'd have known that my name was clean and not besmirched, and that you, you cat, were not defiled by another man's bed.

(LIZAVETA *continues to weep.*)

ANANY YAKOVLICH (*starts to walk up and down the hut*): The thing that hurts and wounds me most is that in Peter I was stupid enough to think of you every single day and night. Don't think that life in Peter is like in a monastery. In the peddling trade especially a man is always thrown with lots of people. I could have found myself a girl as good and as pretty as you, you fool-face, and even with better manners than yours. . . . I could've had my pick for some three rubles, but I wouldn't do it—I didn't even think of such things, not to speak of doing 'em. I didn't want to have anything to do with such things, because I knew I was a married man and a Christian.

LIZAVETA: When you were living so far away and for so many years, could you get along without a woman? How was I to know that?

ANANY YAKOVLICH: No, you knew it well enough, you shameless cheat! If I'd had anything to do with a woman, I wouldn't have thought so much about my home. You know I never failed to send you letters and presents. I wrote and asked you about even the smallest plow: if you had it still and whether you'd had it fixed.

LIZAVETA: I'm guilty before you and my life is in your hands: you can kill me if you like or you can be merciful.

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Your life is in my power, but you've actually killed me. I have no more feeling for you now than for a dead dog. Your mother said the right thing—if I didn't value my own future, I'd plunge that knife on the table there through your heart. Any fool—

a relative of yours or any good-for-nothing peasant who ain't worth half a kopek can slander me now. I must go around the village now and pay my respects to every one, that they may not look askance at me and hint at what you've done. But if any one does insult me, I'll take it all out on you, you cat, because it's all your doing—you're the one that's wronged me. . . . Well, keep on blubbering there! . . . Although you deserve a good thrashing, you ain't got one yet. Oh, God, I never expected such disgrace and such insults! . . . Tell me now, you cat, what shall we do? (*He sits down at the table and covers his face with his hands.*)

(*Silence.*)

ANANY YAKOVLICH (*rising*): Just to avoid the disgrace I'll take it all on myself; we'll make believe at least before strangers that nothing has happened; the child is mine then and you are my faithful wife so far! But if by any chance you repeat such actions with that squire of yours, then it'd be better . . . do you hear me? . . . my breath fails me at the thought! . . . It'd be better, Lizaveta, that you'd never been born at all! You should know best of all by this time what sort of man I am. Then I won't spare either you or myself or that dirty brat of yours: be sure of that! . . . That's my last, solemn word to you!

SCENE V

The same, and a HIRED WOMAN

HIRED WOMAN (*opens the door and looks into the hut*): Lizaveta Ivanovna, come and nurse your baby: he won't take the bottle. I've tried and tried to stick it into his mouth . . . he nearly choked with crying.

(ANANY YAKOVLICH *jumps up*; LIZAVETA *does not move from her seat.*)

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Well, what are you sitting there for? Aren't you satisfied, you good-for-nothing trash that you are? I've told you my decision—get out!

(LIZAVETA *goes out silently.*)

SCENE VI

ANANY YAKOVLICH (*strikes himself on the chest*): The Heavenly Father alone knows how my heart is bleeding black blood.

ACT II

The Squire's Study

SCENE I

CHEGLOV-SOKOVIN, *a lean and weary-looking young man dressed in a heavy baize frock coat is sitting on the sofa, his head drooping. ZOLOTILOV is lounging in an armchair: he is a strong and healthy man; he has several ribbons in his buttonhole and a number of charms hanging from his watch chain.*

ZOLOTILOV: Say what you like, my dear man, but you can't convince me that a man can get upset on account of a mere peasant woman.

CHEGLOV (*with a bitter grin*): Why can't you understand it?

ZOLOTILOV: Because such feelings can be aroused only by women of our own class; by women who look at things and judge them as we do; by women who, if you please, can understand what we say. But these? How could a peasant wench ever captivate your heart? . . . All those creatures ever say is, "Oh, my dear! oh, my darling!" Our grandfathers used to squander their substance on gypsies; they at least were women of fire and passion, but our peasant women—they are like blocks of wood: no matter what passion you display to them they lie there placidly and pick the moss from the cracks in the wall and wonder whether you're going to give them a new dress. . . . Is it possible to fall in love with such an animal?

CHEGLOV (*annoyed*): Why do you throw this love in my teeth all the time? No matter what my infatuation was like in the beginning, I have now become attached to her. After all, I am an honest man. God only knows how sorry I am for her when I see that the situation is becoming absolutely awful, absolutely terrible.

ZOLOTILOV: I don't see anything in this situation that is so terrible or awful.

CHEGLOV: Her husband has just come back. Isn't that bad enough?

ZOLOTILOV: What of that?

CHEGLOV: What of that! Will you proceed to deny all feelings and reason to these people? Isn't he sure to find it out?

ZOLOTILOV: Yes, he'll find it out and he may even be very glad that his wife has been petted by the squire.

CHEGLOV (*making an impatient gesture*): It's your kind who are glad when your superiors steal your wives, but not the peasants.

ZOLOTILOV: Oh well, I don't know about that. At any rate, if your

rival does get a bit angry, he'll just beat her up once or twice and that'll be the end of it.

CHEGLOV: For God's sake, Sergey Vasilyich, don't talk that way! You mustn't touch fresh wounds so roughly. Please understand that there is a child of my own flesh and blood. Understand at least that much and be merciful to me from that side of the question! (*Walks across the room and drinks some vodka.*)

ZOLOTILOV: What if there is a child? Even then I cannot see anything that need upset you so terribly. You can bring him to your house, give him a good education and a good bringing up, and enter him as a burgher or a merchant—and that's all there is to it.

CHEGLOV: That's just it, my dear sir—this woman is not what you think they all are. When she was still with child, I told her, in order to save her from disgrace, that she should expose the child at the door of the bailiff, and she answered me right then and there: "No," she said, "master, I have sinned and I will take the punishment for it, but I won't give away my own child to be abused by strangers—my heart won't let me." Those were her very words.

ZOLOTILOV: These words are plain enough. If you should take the child away from her, your relations with her could come to an end at any time. Now, however, it is different. If her husband gives her a scolding or a beating, she can still claim a right to you for all your life. I know these people exceedingly well, my friend; you can believe me. They are stupid only in doing the master's business, but are very sly and farsighted where it concerns their own interests.

CHEGLOV (*clutching his head*): Do you realize, Sergey Vasilyich, what horrible words you are uttering, and in what a disgusting tone, like Taras Skotinin? *

ZOLOTILOV: I know very well, my dear fellow, that my tone is not very appealing—but what can I do? I have a certain amount of right to use such a tone, because I am your sister's husband and she has asked me to come here and open your eyes.

CHEGLOV: To what do you and my sister want to open my eyes?

ZOLOTILOV: To the fact that you are suffering, God knows why. Just look at yourself and see how you have changed. You are worn out: you are coughing, and coughing like a sick man. And last, but not least, my friend—as the saying goes, you can't hide an awl in a sack—rumors come to us from all quarters that you are drinking. I called on you about eleven o'clock and you already had vodka on your table; this is the third glass you have drunk since I've been here, and this makes us very unhappy. I am also convinced that this woman

* A boorish squire ("Mr. Beastly") in Fonvizin's comedy, *The Young Hopeful*: see page 28.

encourages you in this unfortunate weakness, because it is easier to fish in troubled waters.

CHEGLOV: It is true enough that I drink, and drink to excess; but that this woman is encouraging me to do it is another base slander of your ladies—the gossipers—you may tell them I said so!

ZOLOTILOV: I am sorry to say that this is no gossip, but the absolute truth. However, you cannot be blamed very much, because a man of your age, your means and education, if you please, is at a loss for occupation in this cursed out-of-the-way village.

CHEGLOV: What occupation do you suppose I could find in the city?

ZOLOTILOV: In the first place, you should go into the government service. Please, don't make such faces. . . . I know what all of you reply to that . . . "The service? Good! Servility? Disgusting!"* But that is nonsense. The trouble is you are lazy and conceited: "How can I subordinate myself when my superior is no more clever and is perhaps even more stupid than I am!" You also think that it is vulgar to be a man of society, because you think society is beneath you.

CHEGLOV: Indeed it is beneath me!

ZOLOTILOV: Suppose it is: but here you have got into the rut of the village; you might at least run your estate.

CHEGLOV: I cannot run an estate as you do!

ZOLOTILOV: What else is there left for you to do? Just to make love to a beautiful peasant woman? But the worst feature of all is that when this situation began to seem to you somewhat ticklish, you gave yourself up to a still worse vice in order to down your conscience; and, considering your delicate health, you are now absolutely committing suicide. . . . You are not the first, nor the last of our young men to whom this has happened—believe me! This is my ninth year of service as marshal of the nobility and I have continually observed that as soon as a nobleman becomes intimate with such a woman, the result is invariably the same: drunkenness, keeping at home and unsociability. Your sister and myself, thank the Lord, are not mentioning a word about your affair: you can keep twenty of them, if only you will look at things differently.

CHEGLOV (*smiling bitterly*): But how differently? That's what I don't understand.

ZOLOTILOV: The same way that everybody looks at them. Just to pacify you, I'll cite my own personal experience, although it won't be very edifying. (*In an undertone.*) Here am I, a married man and of middle age, and yet I am not without sin in this respect. However, the domestic happiness of your sister and myself does not suffer from

* A quotation from Griboyedov's comedy, *Wit Works Woe*: see page 103.

it, and I have not grown thin or taken to drink, thank God! And when a few days ago a woman of that sort had the impudence to hold her head high in my wife's presence, I put her where she belonged immediately: "Cricket, stick to your hearth!"

CHEGLOV: Well, you can look at things and understand them as you please, but I look at them— Wait, I think there is some one outside. . . . I am afraid of the least little sound—that's my situation. . . . Who's there?

SCENE II

The same and the BAILIFF

BAILIFF (*coming in*): It's me!

CHEGLOV (*worried*): Oh, Kalistrat, how are you! What is it?

BAILIFF: Oh, nothing much; I only came to say that Anany Yakovlich has come back from Peter.

CHEGLOV: I know it! Well, what of it?

BAILIFF (*scratching his head*): He's behaving awfully. His wife has come over here with me: she got away somehow.

CHEGLOV: Oh, well; call her in. (*Clutches his head.*) O my God!

BAILIFF (*puts his head out of the door*): Come on in! . . . What? Oh, come on, stop that!

CHEGLOV: What's the matter with her?

BAILIFF: She's afraid to come in. . . . "A strange gentleman here," she says.

CHEGLOV: That's all right, Liza, come in! . . . It's my brother; he knows everything.

ZOLOTILOV: Don't be bashful, my dear; don't be bashful . . . I'm no stranger.

(LIZAVETA *comes in timidly.*)

CHEGLOV (*putting his hand on her shoulder*): Come, sit down! . . . What about your scamp of a husband?

LIZAVETA (*sits down with her arms drooping*): Oh, master, do you know what!

CHEGLOV: Well, what is it?

LIZAVETA: He's going to torture me. I'm lost, just clean ruined!

CHEGLOV: Did you put the blame on me—say that it was all my fault?

LIZAVETA: I told him. . . . I tried to lie to him the way you told me: but do you think he believes it?

ZOLOTILOV (*to LIZAVETA*): How does he mean to torture you? (*To CHEGLOV.*) *Elle est très jolie.*

LIZAVETA: I don't know, sir . . . but I know it's something terrible

—we haven't slept for three nights now. He just sits there like a wild beast and stares me straight in the face, as if he were trying to kill me with his look—it's something terrible!

CHEGLOV: That's awful, awful!

BAILIFF: He can't do that! Don't he know that we send such fellows off to Siberia?

LIZAVETA: What does he care? . . . If he was an easy-going man, he'd get it off his chest and forget about it; but he, when he has anything against you, his rage grows stronger and stronger with every hour and day, like a garden nettle, and burns him more and more.

ZOLOTILOV: Just think what a beast!

(CHEGLOV *merely motions with his hands.*)

BAILIFF: That's just it: he's just a snake! . . . Most of our peasants are rough and insolent, but he's the worst of 'em all. When he was living in the village, for just about one year, I almost quit my office: at the village meetings he never let me say a word; he just wanted to be the boss and have 'em do as he liked.

LIZAVETA: The main thing is, master, that he threatens to take me and the baby to Peter; and what use are we to him? . . . Just to suffer under his tyranny!

CHEGLOV (*throwing his head back*): No, I won't permit it! May God punish me for it, but I won't permit it!

LIZAVETA: I don't feel a bit sorry for him; he tells me that he cares no more for me than for a dead dog. He forgets that when we were getting married, maybe I felt that way to him. It's only because I was an orphan and very poor that they forced me to marry him—I felt as if I was being buried alive. Now it's up to you, master: I can't live with him—or near him, either. . . . How can I be a wife to him now anyhow? (*She begins to weep.*)

BAILIFF: He can never take you or your son away from here if he don't get a passport. Why worry the master and yourself, then, about it? You think he'll want to report you as runaways? Here's another squire; he'll tell you the same thing.

ZOLOTILOV (*to LIZAVETA*): Of course he can't! Just look what lovely eyes you have, and you're crying and spoiling them.

LIZAVETA: Oh, sir, how can I think of my eyes now? . . . How can they be pretty if I do nothing but cry when I go to bed at night and when I get up in the morning? Other women, no matter what happens to them, don't even feel it, but I can't stand it. I've been pining away ever since he came home. . . . I walk around like a crazy woman. . . . My heart gets so heavy that I can't even breathe—as if the end was coming. (*She continues to cry hysterically.*)

CHEGLOV (*goes over to her and takes her hand*): Come now, don't cry, please don't!

LIZAVETA: How can I help crying, master? The only thing he wants to do now is to take me away from you, no matter what happens, and keep me to himself, but I don't want him to. . . . I don't want him to, and that's all! I feel toward him now worse than God knows what. Do you think I went wrong because I was afraid of you? Are you that kind of a man? When you used to come here long ago, when you were just a boy, I used to look and look at you, and I can't tell you how attached I am to you now and how I love you. And this is what I'm ready to do now, master—no matter what his plans are: Let him cut me in pieces with a knife, or drown me in the river, but I want to live near you or just die and never see this world again. Now you can do just what you like!

CHEGLOV: I know, my dearest, I know all this. . . . But you see, I'm a good-for-nothing—a scoundrel! O God, send me death!

(*He clasps his hands and begins to walk up and down the room in despair. LIZAVETA looks at him frightened.*)

ZOLOTILOV (*to CHEGLOV*): What is the matter with you, brother? Can't you be just a bit of a man? It makes me laugh to look at you.

BAILIFF (*shrugging his shoulders*): I'm now over sixty and I've never yet seen such a gentleman, and that's the truth. He's torturing and tormenting himself over a peasant—over an ignorant fool. If you'd send for him, I could make him shut up, right here in front of you, with two words. Sergey Vasilyich, you're a squire too, so you know how peasants are: if you give 'em a finger, they take the whole hand. Why are you so afraid of him? . . . Just explain everything to him and that'll be all there is to it. . . . He'll just have to do what he's told.

ZOLOTILOV (*shrugging his shoulders*): I really don't know. . . . If that's how things stand, then of course it's better to have a frank talk with him. . . . But how about her?

LIZAVETA: Why should I hide things from him, sir? I don't want to; and it may be right, too, what Kalistrat Grigoryich just said. If the master'll have a talk with him, he might get a little scared.

CHEGLOV: All right, I'm willing to have a talk with him quite openly. . . . Bring him here immediately. Kalistrat, go bring him here!

BAILIFF: All right, sir: but we must get her out of here first of all. (*To LIZAVETA.*) Run along and tell my old woman to go and send him here, and you can hide yourself in our house if you like.

LIZAVETA (*rising*): I'll run out the back way and he won't see me. Good-by, my darling master! (*She kisses CHEGLOV and goes, but*

stops at the door.) When I go after the cows, maybe I'll stop in here; I couldn't live through the day otherwise.

CHEGLOV: All right, all right.

LIZAVETA (*to ZOLOTILOV*): Good-by to you too, sir.

ZOLOTILOV: Good-by, good-by, my dear.

(LIZAVETA *goes out.*)

SCENE III

ZOLOTILOV (*to CHEGLOV*): *Elle est très jolie, vraiment.* . . . But what will you talk about to this man?

BAILIFF: In the first place talk about money to him, because he's very greedy: just tell him that you'll let him go without paying rent; and then, if it's the master's will—because none of them like the mowing—instead of making him do the mowing in our Filin estate, let him go to Peter—just let him do what he wants, be his own master! And about his wife—because she has a child, the master wishes that she should not be torn away from it—nobody but the mother should be near a child! How can he take her with him?—It's impossible!

CHEGLOV (*impatiently interrupting him*): I know what to tell him without your advice, my dear sir.

BAILIFF (*interrupting him in turn*): Excuse me, sir, but you don't know; you know very little about these things! (*Turns to ZOLOTILOV.*) Sergey Vasilyich, you're his brother, you see, maybe you can tell him a thing or two: because of his kind-heartedness his ancestor's estate is just falling to pieces. Whenever a woman comes to him, no matter who she is, and pretends to be sick: "Oh, dear master, my darling, let me off my job!" "Go, my dear; you're free for the rest of your life." . . . He doesn't even know that they train bears to imitate those women; how they crawl when they go to work, but how they run home! Or some peasant rogue, a drunkard, will come home from Peter with no cross on him: * instead of making him work three times as hard for his sins . . . "Give him leave of absence for two years," says he: "Let him rest and get well."

ZOLOTILOV: That's what I call just spoiling the people!

BAILIFF: Of course they get spoiled, sir! And then the domestics: this one was his father's valet, so none of his family need to raise a finger to work; and his mother's housekeeper and her family just the same way. I served the old master for forty-nine years, praised be the Lord, but what of it? It's our duty to serve the master as long as we have the strength to: I, my old woman, my son and my daughter

* An orthodox Russian peasant wears a cross on his breast next the skin: to sell it for drink is a deep disgrace.

are ready to serve at anything! A true servant, a servant according to the Holy Scriptures, will sacrifice his very life for his master.

BUTLER (*coming in*): Anany Yakovlich is here, he says you sent for him.

CHEGLOV: Bring him in!

(BUTLER *goes out*.)

CHEGLOV (*to ZOLOTILOV*): Please, Sergey Vasilyich, leave us alone.

ZOLOTILOV: Don't worry, I'll go! (*He gets up to go, then stops for a moment*.) But why do you drink vodka?

(*He shrugs his shoulders and goes out. ANANY YAKOVLICH comes in through another door*.)

SCENE IV

CHEGLOV, BAILIFF and ANANY YAKOVLICH

CHEGLOV: Good day, Anany Yakovlich!

ANANY YAKOVLICH (*bows silently and puts money on the table*): Here's the rent.

CHEGLOV: Don't bother about that! (*After a pause*.) How has trade been lately?

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Trade's not so bad.

CHEGLOV: At country houses, I suppose.

ANANY YAKOVLICH: At country houses only in the summer.

BAILIFF: He leads a fine life in Peter: he has lots of money. . . . The food is very good . . . tavern food . . . plenty of vodka too. . . . He's become a regular dandy . . . he might even go visiting the young ladies; peasant women from the village are nobody compared to those city girls. . . . I, too, lived over there once and had a swell time—I still remember something of it!

ANANY YAKOVLICH: If a man takes a notion to, he can have a swell time here, too: he might return from every holiday dead drunk if he wanted to—but a man who has his mind on business has no time for foolery even in Peter.

CHEGLOV (*hotly*): The point is this, Anany: I sent for you to have a talk with you. Undoubtedly you know the relation which exists between us, and the first thing I ask of you is that you forget that I am your master, and be absolutely frank with me. I understand all you peasants, and particularly you; Kalistrat Grigoryich can tell you that.

BAILIFF: Sure I can tell that—any time and to any one; but he's not some fool peasant: he can judge of your kindness for himself.

ANANY YAKOVLICH: What's there to judge of when I don't understand anything, and maybe I don't want to understand it. What's all this foolish talk about now? . . . I don't want to understand anything!

CHEGLOV: The talk had to come to this sooner or later, and I am asking you once more that in this case you should consider me as your equal. If I have wronged you in any way then demand of me any satisfaction you like! If you want money, I will mortgage my estate this very minute and give you all I get for it.

ANANY YAKOVLIKH (*after a short silence*): Even if I am just a simple peasant, sir, as you know, I'll not sell my honor for any amount of money. I'd be ashamed to talk with you about this even in private, and you have a third person here, and you make my blood rise to my face. This isn't like a gentleman.

CHEGLOV: The third person doesn't matter a bit; it's just false modesty on your part.

BAILIFF: What harm am I doing here? If the master gives me his confidence, can you take it away from me?

ANANY YAKOVLIKH: Yes, I can—easy! I never gave you much of a chance to talk too much. Have you forgotten, maybe, when you and that drunken surveyor were dividing up the land? You came near selling the whole estate for a quart of French vodka!—the master knows about it!— And this business here—if it's come to that—concerns me more than it does the master and I can always make you shut your mouth.

BAILIFF: What do you bring up the measuring of the land for? Why do you throw that up to me? If you knew about it, why didn't you tell the master at the time? You're ready to jump at a person's throat in the village assembly, but now that you're in trouble yourself you try to put the blame on somebody else. . . . What have I to do with this business of yours?

ANANY YAKOVLIKH: I know how you come in.

BAILIFF: Do you! Well!

CHEGLOV (*interrupting him*): Keep quiet, Kalistrat! The point is this, Anany: I am an honest man, and I have decided to act very frankly with you; I have heard that you want to take your wife and her baby to Peter. Isn't that so?

ANANY YAKOVLIKH (*getting still paler*): If that too has already been reported to you, sir, then you may be sure I'll do it.

CHEGLOV: Suppose this is just what I'll not permit you to do!

ANANY YAKOVLIKH: Not much! If I pay the rent for myself and my wife—and I'll even pay double—who can stop me then?

CHEGLOV (*beating his chest*): I'll stop you, Anany; I will, do you hear? And I have a right to do it because your wife doesn't love you.

ANANY YAKOVLIKH: That's my own affair, sir, to see if I can make her love me there or not.

CHEGLOV: And my affair is not to let you do anything of the kind.

. . . What's the use of making a secret of it now?—She, poor thing, doesn't want to go at all. Only, God knows that there was not only not a shadow of violence on my part, in which case I'd be ready to kill myself, but there was not even the slightest thought of deceit. It was a question merely of love. Your wife might have been a lady, a peasant, a merchant's wife or a duchess, it would not have made any difference to me. . . . If your feelings are wounded and your jealousy aroused, then let's have a duel: I can see no other way out of this situation.

ANANY YAKOVLICH: I can take your words only as a joke, sir. Our blood is worthless compared to a gentleman's, and all we can do is to take our punishment.

CHEGLOV: But why? Not at all. You as husband are in the right, and I am right too. . . . Why—don't you understand, Anany?—I have a child here, it's mine and not yours; and finally I swear to you that your wife will not be my mistress, but only the mother of my child, only that! But I cannot leave these two creatures, who are dearer to me than life itself, in your power; I cannot, do you understand!

ANANY YAKOVLICH: If she's my wife now, then the child is also mine. God united us, do you think a man can separate us? Who can do that?

CHEGLOV: I can! . . . I repeat to you, I can! I regard it as my duty because you are a tyrant. You married her when you knew she didn't love you; when she used to avoid you at first, you assumed a husband's rights by force. Finally, you are a hypocrite: before strangers you were gentle and kind to her, but you tormented her with your jealousy—whole nights long you would torture her because she looked at a man, or for a sigh which escaped from her, possibly because she didn't love you—I know everything.

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Permit me, sir, if this shameless woman, besides being a wanton, talks that way about me to any one she happens to meet, then I may do something even worse to her.

CHEGLOV: You'll do nothing of the kind. Only by stepping over my dead body can you do anything to her.—Here, Kalistrat, I charge you and beg of you to do me this favor: watch over her day and night and see that not a hair falls from her head. You can do anything you choose to me but not to her! She is more to me than life itself: be sure of that! Be sure of it, I tell you! (*He goes out.*)

SCENE V

The BAILIFF and ANANY YAKOVLICH

BAILIFF: You fool of a peasant, you're a fool, and you come from Peter too! The master's trying to be kind to you, and you—!

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Maybe you need such kindness, but I don't want it.

BAILIFF: What *do* you want, then, your Royal Highness? Any other peasant, if he were excused from paying the rent, would be glad to do anything at all for the master, but you—he wanted to secure your happiness for the rest of your life—you should at least appreciate his kindness, you ugly beast that you are!

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Kalistrat Grigoryich, I've already asked you not to meddle in my affairs. A man of your age and judgment should give good guidance to us young men, but you're doing just the opposite. It's not I that should have self-respect, but you! If you've lost all sense of shame, then think at least of your own gray hairs. You can't escape the grave, and in that other world they won't have fire hot enough to burn and to scorch you for all your abominations.

BAILIFF: What are my abominations? Because I don't let you have your own way—that's why all of you are angry!—And I won't, seeing that's my business. I've served the old masters, but you haven't—that's where all the trouble comes from! None of you rogues could ever even dream of such terrors as we used to expect to break out on us, like a storm, every minute of the day. When I was your age, when my beard was just beginning to grow, I grew dumb and trembled under the glance of the master—and you—just think what you've just said to the master here—just think, you damn fool!

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Perhaps you want to be such a servant, but I don't. I don't sell the master's grain for him and don't get any commission for it—the worst tenant can satisfy the master now if he gives you a bribe; that's the way you earn your living. But I live honorably . . . by my own labor—and not by any particular private services . . . I could never do such things.

BAILIFF: Oh my, what an honest man you are! and a just man above all others! Just look at him in wonderment and do as he does! Just let him rule over a woman with an iron hand and mistreat her.

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Who can judge between husband and wife? Maybe you, eh?

BAILIFF: I will if I'm put in authority over you.

ANANY YAKOVLICH: There are higher authorities than you—and I know how to find my way to them.

BAILIFF: You think the authorities will listen to you, you red beard—that they'll say: "We are honored, Anany Yakovlich, please command us!" . . . Oh, you fool—you ignorant peasant, you snake, you beast!

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Don't bark like that if you don't want me to shut your mouth for you!

BAILIFF: This isn't all; I'll take a birch rod to you yet!

ANANY YAKOVLICH: You ain't the size.

BAILIFF: Calves and little kids ain't the size, but I am!

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Not much you ain't!

SCENE VI

The same and ZOLOTILOV

ZOLOTILOV (*coming in*): Hush! be quiet! Why are you raising such a racket, you wild beasts! . . . (*To ANANY.*) Do you know what you've brought the master to? There he is in there, lying unconscious, because of your kindness. Do you want to kill him altogether? I wish you to know that I am his heir and that he is very dear to me.—I shall know who his murderers are. I have heard everything and I am not so gentle as my brother: if anything happens to him, which God forbid, I'll know how to settle with you.

BAILIFF: He doesn't know what's good for him; just likes to meddle in other people's business, not knowing what the old master—may he rest in peace!—ordered me to do just before he died. "Kalistrat," says he, "I'm leaving my son at a tender age, don't you neglect him!" And I remember those words; no matter what happens, I'll always carry 'em out. My master now has commanded me that not a hair should fall from his wife's head; and I'm telling you, Sergey Vasilyich, that if I hear even the least little thing I'll make arrangements for her to-morrow. I'll bring her to the manor to look after the wheat—for the whole winter; there you are! Do what you like! Be the boss!

ANANY YAKOVLICH: You can never do that and I'm not afraid of anybody when I know I haven't done any wrong.

ZOLOTILOV: We've had enough of you; don't talk! Clear out of here—we've had plenty of your foolish talk. (*Goes out.*)

ANANY YAKOVLICH (*going also; in a suppressed voice*): I don't want to talk with you, no matter what it's about.

SCENE VII

BAILIFF (*alone*)

BAILIFF (*calls after him*): I won't do it, eh? . . . I will do it! . . . This isn't the first time that you've done me dirt. If you want to give me away because I did something when the land was divided, or because I steal grain and sell it, then I'll show you what I can do! . . . I'll say such things that you won't be able to wash yourself clean, you skunk you!

ACT III

The same cottage as in Act I

SCENE I

MATRENA is sitting at the open window, through which SPIRIDONYEVNA is looking out. LIZAVETA is lying down behind the partition, where the cradle with the child is hanging.

SPIRIDONYEVNA: Yes, my dear, he tried to persuade him—very gently at first—Sergey Vasilyich was there too, and afterwards they sent for the bailiff. . . . They tried and tried to convince him—but nothing doing: they'd say something to him, but he'd answer back twice as much. Did you ever see such brave and fearless fellows!

MATRENA: Oh, my dear, it's not easy for him, either; maybe he don't want to say and do all these things. To tell the honest truth, *they're* the ones to blame and they ought to leave him alone—ain't he her husband?

SPIRIDONYEVNA: The bailiff and the manor folk think differently—they take the squire's part. He walked out as pale as a ghost when he got so angry with Anany; he leaned against the door jamb and called to the butler: "Get me a basin, quick"; he nearly filled the whole thing with blood. "You can see," says he, "I'm losing my life by the grace of Anany Yakovlich. You won't have to serve me much longer . . . you'll soon have other masters." . . . So they feel dreadfully sorry for him.

MATRENA: I don't know, my dear: I suppose a squire can say anything he likes—but seems to me such a fine squire had no business to do what he did. He just made trouble for himself, got the woman into trouble and got mad with the peasant all for nothing. . . . And those manor dogs and that scamp of a bailiff amuse themselves over another man's trouble and make believe they're sorry.

SPIRIDONYEVNA: And now, my dear, the squire's afraid that something may happen to Lizaveta; and he's talking about it all the time to Sergey Vasilyich.

MATRENA: You think he'll spare her? He's her boss just the same, my dear. When he came back from the squire, he wasn't a bit like a man: he was a wild beast. I got so scared that I ran out of the hut: at first I could hear her sobbing; she was imploring him, I suppose, but suddenly all was quiet.

SPIRIDONYEVNA (*with curiosity*): You think he beat her?

MATRENA: He certainly didn't stroke her head, I'm sure of that: only there are all kinds of beatings, you know. When a man flies into such

a fury he doesn't know what he's doing. . . . I couldn't stand it any longer—a mother's heart you know—I ran into the hut. There he sat on the bench, his mouth foaming, and she'd just dropped on the bed: her cap on one side, her hair all loose, her face covered! . . . It's the second day she's been lying that way without saying a word; she only asked that we get her the baby from the outside room so that it wouldn't die of hunger.

SPIRIDONYEVNA: How can she have any milk left in her breast, my dear; I wonder it don't burn up and dry up from all these fears and worries?

MATRENA: You can just imagine what sort of milk it is. . . . She ain't had a drop of food in her mouth Lord knows how many days.

SPIRIDONYEVNA: And where is he? I see he's not home.

MATRENA: I don't know. . . . Maybe he's gone to the priest. He left me here to guard her. "Stay here, mother dear," says he, "and watch that Lizaveta don't take one step out." He stripped all her warm clothes off her and took away her shoes and locked her in. "Let the bitch sit there like a prisoner," says he; "I care nothing about her! She's bringing it all on herself."

SPIRIDONYEVNA (*looks to one side*): There he comes, my dear! . . . He's coming back. . . . He looks so furious; oh my, how furious! He's staring at the ground and don't see a thing.—Well, good-by, my dear! . . . I've made your house chilly enough already.

MATRENA: Now that you're here, can't you stay a while and have a bite to eat?

SPIRIDONYEVNA: No thank you, my dear; I'm busy! I have to stop at the bailiff's yet: they're brewing some new beer and promised me some yeast for my dough. Good-by. (*She goes out.*)

SCENE II

MATRENA (*closing the window*): Oh, what troubles, what awful troubles! Think upon King David, O Lord, and upon all his meekness! . . . Our hope now is only in Our Lady, the Holy Virgin of Tikhvin. . . . Open the gates of thy mercy, O Mother, for thou alone art our refuge! . . . Have mercy on us and defend us! . . . Our martyrs and saints, Nicholas the Wonder-Worker and Deacon Stephen the Martyr—protect with your wings your unworthy servants, if in words or thought or even unknowingly they have sinned before the Lord, O our martyrs and protectors!

SCENE III

The same and ANANY YAKOVLICH

MATRENA gets up quickly and stands in a respectful position; ANANY YAKOVLICH sits down at the table.

MATRENA (after a short silence): Will you have dinner, my dear? We have very good food ready.

ANANY YAKOVLICH (leaning his elbows on the table and resting his head on his hand): No, thanks. I don't feel like eating. (After a short silence.) You might heat up the samovar; my throat feels kind of dry.

MATRENA: Very well, sir. (She goes out.)

SCENE IV

ANANY YAKOVLICH and LIZAVETA behind the partition. Silence again

ANANY YAKOVLICH (glancing at the partition): Lizaveta! What are you lying there all the time for? Come out here! (Silence.) You know you did wrong, then what are you angry for? I don't want to punish you, I just want to set you right—if only you have some sense left. . . . Get up now, and don't act silly!

LIZAVETA: I can't; let me alone please!

ANANY YAKOVLICH: You think I feel any better than you do? I'm not crazy and I'm not scolding you just for spite. . . . No sooner did I excuse your crime, than you began to do it all over again. Even if I was made of stone, I'd burst. . . . If you didn't act like that—I wouldn't even look cross at you, not to speak of beating.

LIZAVETA: Even before that I had plenty of your nasty looks.

ANANY YAKOVLICH: You lie, you know you lie! . . . If something like what you said really happened, you know as well as I do why. . . . No peasant ever marries because of any particular desire of his own, but when he marries in the Holy Church he must live according to its law. . . . That's all I wanted, maybe, when I saw that you turned your mug away from me as if I were just a filthy goat.

LIZAVETA: I didn't turn away from pleasure.

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Did you turn away from any particular sorrow? When you were married you didn't have to throw away your leather boots and get into bast shoes—you had a lot of finer gowns to wear than you ever did before. Why don't you appreciate, at least, that I denied myself many things while I lived in Peter? Why, and for whom did I do it? . . . Here I have five hundred rubles cash in my pocket now. . . . I thought: Next year I'll open my own shop, even if it's small; I'll

rent a nice apartment; I'll bring Lizaveta down and I won't even let her cook: "Here, you can drink tea and coffee, and live in peace and happiness!"

LIZAVETA: I don't want anything of yours! You'll find many women in Peter who'll go after your money—I won't be jealous of 'em!

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Oh, yes! you always thrust this in my face—Peter women! If you know anything about Peter, speak up then and be plain about it! I'm always ready to face the justice of God. . . .

(*At this moment MATRENA brings in the samovar and begins to put the cups and teapot on the table. LIZAVETA is silent.*)

ANANY YAKOVLICH (*continues*): Yes! You don't even answer because you know better than any one else that nothing ever happened over there and couldn't've happened. But now—God knows, I may do something even worse! Why should I hold in! . . . I'll just take this money; I'll go to the tavern and I'll just waste it there—put an end to it and to my life too!

MATRENA (*moves a cup of tea over to ANANY YAKOVLICH*): Here's some tea for you, my dear!

ANANY YAKOVLICH: I see it! Give some tea to your lady over there too!

MATRENA: Yes, I'll give her some. (*She goes behind the partition.*)

ANANY YAKOVLICH (*moving his cup away*): I never even dreamed that I'd come to this. All my hopes, all my plans are shattered as if blown away by the wind.

MATRENA (*returns with the full cup of tea*): She won't take it. . . . She don't want it.

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Well, what do you call that? She don't even want tea? (*He smiles sadly and shakes his head.*) Oh well, when a person gets a crazy bug into his head, you can't do anything with him; he just can't understand anything: you can be as kind to him as you will and he'll take a stick to you. Here I am, pleading with you, not in anger but with a bleeding heart, and with tears in my eyes, right before your mother: be reasonable and let's live like other good folks!

LIZAVETA: Good folks are no example for us!

MATRENA: Just listen to her! Do you want to copy after bad people? Oh, you vile creature! . . . Haven't you enough yet? . . . Anany Yakovlich is in a kind mood now, honest to God he is.

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Then you must consider this too. If I'm going to the dogs, well, I suppose I was a fool; you may even be glad of it. But you too may land in the grave for it; and what'll happen to you then? God in Heaven is just. He sees it all plain and'll never forgive you, Lizaveta; mark my word, he won't!

MATRENA: Haven't I been telling her and telling her the very same

thing, my dear? . . . I worked and worked for her and from the sweat of my brow I gave her all I could instead of sending her out to beg, and this is how she pays me back. (*She begins to weep.*)

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Oh, come, please, you're not any better! I don't want to say anything, but for all I know maybe you were proud to have such an honor.—The squire took your daughter—you forgot that it makes no difference whether it be the squire or some clown: one scoundrel's as bad as the other—the disgrace is just as great! . . . Maybe you thought he'd be nice to her all his life and he'd make a lady out of her? He'll just fool around with the stupid hussy for another year or so and then throw her out like a dirty bitch! "Go chase yourself and let people scold and laugh at you!"

MATRENA: She'll get nothing out of it, my dear, nothing!

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Then why do such a thing? . . . It'd be different if I made her go wrong, but I'm trying with all my might to set her straight. I gave in as much as I could, I tell you; and no matter what's eating me up inside, I try to forgive and forget: as they say: "What's done is done; you can't bring back the past!" At any rate I want to live straight in the future.—And now, run away from all temptation to sin, as the priest said, and come with me right now, tomorrow, to Peter. If they refuse to give me a passport, I'll take you away without it; I'll just tell the authorities plain, why I did it.

MATRENA: Just go ahead and do it, my dear! Don't ask her! I beg you, don't. Why should you be afraid of anybody?

ANANY YAKOVLICH: There's no question of being afraid. I was thinking that maybe she'll come to her senses and follow the right road of her own free will . . . but I'll do, of course, just what I want to do and what's the right thing. The husband is master of his wife! . . . She's not my strumpet, to be kept as long as she behaves, and kicked out if she don't. . . . I was married to her in the church. If you find any fault in your wife, you must correct it as you see fit—with kindness or with violence, but correct it you must.

MATRENA: Yes indeed, my dear, you've got to correct it. If you didn't teach and beat us stupid women, what'd become of us? Even though you're angry at me, I'll tell you just the same: Don't leave her to me. I can't manage her: when I scold her she won't listen to me and I haven't enough strength to beat her. All I can do is to send her to the devil.

LIZAVETA (*groaning*): Go on cursing me, go on!

MATRENA: Maybe you think I won't? Go to blue hell, you she-devil, to eternal torment! That's my mother's blessing for you!

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Stop that! Enough of your foolish nonsense!

MATRENA: My dear! she made me lose all patience.

SCENE V

The same and the HIRED WOMAN

HIRED WOMAN (*looking in the door*): Anany Yakovlich! The bailiff's here: he's asking for you and Lizaveta Ivanovna.

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Lizaveta Ivanovna? . . . Come here, come on in.

HIRED WOMAN (*without coming in*): No, my dear, I'm not dressed up, he's asking . . . Oh, so many peasants came with him.

ANANY YAKOVLICH: What's it all about, what tricks are these? (*To MATRENA.*) Go see what they want!

(*MATRENA and the HIRED WOMAN go out.*)

ANANY YAKOVLICH (*to LIZAVETA*): If this scoundrel breaks in here and if you say one word in his presence, I'll not part with you alive, Lizaveta.

SCENE VI

The same and the BAILIFF

BAILIFF: Is Anany Yakovlich at home?

ANANY YAKOVLICH: He was here, but he's all gone. . . . What d'you want?

BAILIFF (*coming in*): I want— (*Turning to the door.*) Come in, folks! Deputy, come on in! (*The DEPUTY comes in.*) Fedor Petrovich, come in, old man! Matvey! . . . Kirilo! . . . Just come on in, all of you, whoever there is! . . .

(*FEDOR PETROVICH, a lame peasant, a cross-eyed peasant, a young boy, and DAVID IVANOV come in.*)

BAILIFF (*to ANANY YAKOVLICH*): I summoned you to a meeting yesterday and you didn't show up! . . . And to-day old Spiridonyevna ran over and told me some new things about your doings. . . . So I just took the people and came here to you.

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Just come in, please. . . . But I don't know if you'll like my refreshments.

BAILIFF: You just wait a while; you'll have plenty of time to laugh. (*To the peasants.*) Now, my dear and honored people, I have brought you here, because I can't handle this man alone. I'm giving him over to you; you judge him as best you can!

FEDOR PETROVICH (*leaning on his crutch and munching*): Kalistrat Grigoryich, we know we have nothing to do here, because we don't know why and what for you have brought us.

BAILIFF: I brought you here, my dear old fellow, because you and I

are serving the masters for the third generation; we've seen the same things in our lifetime. The deceased Alexey Grigoryich, may he rest in peace, had all kinds of doings with women. Right in your own family there was plenty of it—maybe you still remember it?

FEDOR PETROVICH (*hurt*): Why, pray, do you use such words to an old man? . . . Leave me alone, please, I beg you.

BAILIFF: I'm not saying anything against you, but that deputy—he can't deny it. It wasn't his wife but near enough kin . . . his sister. . . . We know what relations she had with the master in his last years.

DEPUTY (*in a squeaky voice*): Please, sir, please, how do I know about such relations; I was living in Peter all that time. . . . And even now I'm so tied down to my job that I don't know anything about myself or anybody else.

BAILIFF: That's not what we're talking about at all, you fool. I'm praising you because you never made any kind of fuss. And David Ivanov there, too. There he is and I'll say it right to his face: he ought to've punished his wife a long time ago for all her fine doings, but he lets everything go, because he's meek and humble.

DAVID IVANOV: Oh, go on, don't set me up as an example. I forgot about it a long time ago: let her go to the devil!

BAILIFF (*pointing at ANANY YAKOVLICH*): Yes, but this fellow has other things to say: he wants to make a rumpus.

ANANY YAKOVLICH (*controlling himself with difficulty*): Look here, Kalistrat Grigoryich, did you and these fools come here to make fun of me or do you want to make me do something terrible? . . . Just tell me that!

BAILIFF: I've nothing to tell you. I've sung my song to you already. All these years you lived in Peter as a jolly bachelor, Lord knows what kind of a life you led out there; but here in the village—if some little thing did happen, you don't want to suffer it. Do you think you're the Great Mogul?

ANANY YAKOVLICH: I'm great if I know my own business—and you don't have to teach me to know it.

BAILIFF: I'm not teaching you because I want to, but because the squire commanded me to. (*To the PEASANTS.*) The squire commanded me in the name of the whole estate that not a hair should fall from his wife's head; but he, as soon as he came home, nearly thrashed her to death, and now he don't give her food or drink: she hasn't any milk in her to feed the child. The squire can hold us responsible for that sooner than he can him, and you'll have to answer for it as well as I.

(*Conversation among the PEASANTS.*)

FEDOR PETROVICH: Why will we have to answer for it if we've done nothing?

DEPUTY: But the squire! He can do whatever he likes; whatever he commands we have to do.

LAME PEASANT: Of course—it's his will.

POCK-MARKED PEASANT: You can never get away from it, my boy.

DAVID IVANOV: If we were enemies of yours, it would be different.

YOUNG BOY: That's what I say: at the village meeting they talked it into me, but now I don't know what it was all about.

DAVID IVANOV: But, boss, just consider! Take Anany Yakovlich, do we know what the squire's commands are, about him?

ANANY YAKOVLICH: You can't tell me it's the squire's command. . . . Oh, you damned beasts that you are! And you call yourselves the people! . . . If I'm given over into your hands for your stupid judgment, then who's to command you? . . . It looks like what the proverb says is true: that nowadays the sense of the people comes straight from the tavern. All right then, I'll roll three barrels full of vodka out for you, you pigs; only speak in the name of God and his justice!

FEDOR PETROVICH: We didn't say anything that wasn't just. . . . Now, my friend, you're just talking. . . . When we're at the village meeting and talk about land or taxes, of course it's the business of every single peasant—every one'll speak up, but now, in such a case as this, we don't know anything and can't say anything.

ANANY YAKOVLICH: No, an old man like you, if you think you've just a little more sense than the others, should've said that you not only don't want to be in this gang, but you should've stopped this murderer and convinced the others too.

FEDOR PETROVICH: I can't tear myself in two for your sake. . . . I'm a man subject to orders, you know.

ANANY YAKOVLICH: I see you're all alike, you traitors and Judases. . . . He just said one word about your past and forgotten affair and you hid your mug in your beard for shame. . . . And squeaky Deputy hears a word about his sister, that common thing, and he forgets the whole thing too. What do you think I am, after all that? Maybe you think I'm like that scoundrel David, that you come here to my house and insult me so cruelly? I haven't any more patience to stand all this. I'm telling you right now, if any of you value your lives, get out of here! . . . My ax is very sharp!

FEDOR PETROVICH: You can't threaten us with an ax, my friend! . . . You called us fools and pigs and now you threaten us with the ax—what's all this for?

BAILIFF: Because he hasn't given you enough yet, honest! Come on, Anany, you give it to them! Just take one and then another, and sock 'em in the jaw: "Take that, people, if you're such fools."

YOUNG BOY: Do you think we're such cheap trash? . . . If he starts beating us, we'll do the same to him.

BAILIFF: Never mind beating him, just bind him in ropes for me and then set his wife free. I can't leave her with him. I can't watch him. This very day she's going to the manor, to live in a room of her own, if I have anything to say!

ANANY YAKOVLICH: You think she will?

BAILIFF: Yes, she will!

ANANY YAKOVLICH: You think so, eh? . . . And what if I bury her before you even get a chance to do it? (*Pounding himself on the chest.*) Don't make me lose my last drop of patience, Kalistrat Grigoryich! You didn't come here because the squire commanded you; you just came here to get even with me. If that's what you want, then let's go to the squire!

BAILIFF: Oh, yes, you think I'll just run. This place's good enough for me.

ANANY YAKOVLICH: I won't stand here and look at you. You're bringing me to such a point that one of us two is going to die. You'd better take care of your gray hairs!

BAILIFF: I'm not afraid of you. You haven't power enough to do the least little thing to me or your wife.

ANANY YAKOVLICH: My wife! If the beast blabs about every step I take, I'm not going to hide anything any more. I'll start right in beating and punishing her right now in broad daylight and in the public square; I'll put her in chains before your vile eyes and throw her into an ice cellar and there she'll freeze and choke to death, damn her soul!

SCENE VII

The same and LIZAVETA, who comes in hurriedly from behind the partition, with a tousled head, in an old shabby gown, and barefooted.

LIZAVETA: No! No! . . . you can't have it your way . . . never! You've ruled over me long enough! . . . I'm telling you, my dear bailiff, right here—he's ordered me around enough already, and you can't tell what he may do yet: *that* he won't even say.

ANANY YAKOVLICH (*letting his hands fall*): Lizaveta, go away . . . for the love of God, go away; let me attend to my own business!

LIZAVETA: It's not your business, it's mine! (*To the PEASANTS.*) I'm sure you all remember how I was married. . . . I was carried off in the bridal sledge almost bound. I'd rather have thrown away my innocence to a bandit in the forest than to him!— Don't ask me, then, whether that made me a sinner or a righteous woman. And now I've

lost all sense of shame and I'm telling you all that I'm the squire's mistress. So take me to the master now—I'm ready to be the meanest cowherd or dog, only to live near the master; but I'm not going to mind this villain and let him beat me. He's stripped off my shoes and all my clothes—but he can't stop me anyhow—I'll go away to the master. *(She begins to look for clothes in the chest and on the shelves.)*

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Lizaveta, I'm telling you once more, don't do it!

BAILIFF: Never mind "don't do it"! *(To the YOUNG BOY.)* Give her your sheepskin and boots—just take her over to the estate!

(The YOUNG BOY answers him only with a glance.)

ANANY YAKOVLICH *(to the PEASANTS)*: My dear people, what's all this? Won't you help a poor fellow out? Think just a little of my present situation: to come to me all of a sudden and bring me such disgrace and such insults! *(He gets down on his knees.)* With tears in my eyes, and on my knees, I beg you to help me out just a little; don't push me down to the bottom! God'll reward you for it.

(He makes a low bow to all the people.)

FEDOR PETROVICH: What can I do, my dear fellow? Well, I'll try to help you out. *(To LIZAVETA.)* How can you, a married woman, dare to go away from your husband? You just ask the squire and see if he'll allow you to do it!

BAILIFF: She does it because he's allowed her to do it. You old devil, what are you butting in for? *(To the YOUNG BOY.)* I told you to take off your sheepskin and boots quick, and give 'em to her!

THE YOUNG BOY: I haven't a sheepskin or boots for this business. *(Goes out quickly.)*

BAILIFF: Oh, you devil, you ruffian—what people! Here, Lizaveta, put on my cloak! *(Takes his cloak off.)*

LIZAVETA: Give it to me, sir! I'll put my little one, my precious one, in it; and I'll run just the way I am; I'll be all right. *(She quickly goes behind the partition.)*

ANANY YAKOVLICH *(jumps up and runs after her)*: I won't give you the baby!

BAILIFF: That devil, he'll thrash the woman again! . . . Bind him, boys, be quick!

(Not one of the peasants stirs.)

LIZAVETA *(off stage)*: Give me the baby, give him to me or I'll scratch your eyes out!

ANANY YAKOVLICH *(off stage)*: Oh, you cat, you even dare to lift your hand against me! There, you can have your ugly brat!

(A terrible crash is heard followed by a piercing cry from the baby.)

LIZAVETA *(off stage)*: Good Lord! he's killed the baby!

BAILIFF: What a crime! Now see what you've done, you devils! Didn't I tell you to bind him?

(*Gives the POCK-MARKED PEASANT a punch in the neck.*)

POCK-MARKED PEASANT: How can we bind him? . . . Give us a rope! Where's a rope?

DAVID IVANOV (*pulling a rope from the shelf*): Here's a rope. Go on in there!

POCK-MARKED PEASANT: Why should I go in? . . . He might hit me with an ax. Go on in yourself!

LIZAVETA (*off stage*): O God, he's dead; his head is split in half!

DEPUTY: (*looks behind the partition timidly*): Don't worry, he won't touch you! He's broken the window and escaped!

BAILIFF: Help! Sound an alarm and catch him, you devils! . . . What will the master do to us now! We're done for!

ACT IV

The living-room of CHEGLOV's house

SCENE I

A LAWYER is writing at the table. The DISTRICT CHIEF OF POLICE is sitting at the same table. In front of him stands the BAILIFF.

CHIEF OF POLICE: You'll have to answer why you didn't stop him and arrest him!

LAWYER: It's strange how one peasant was able to escape from a whole village!

BAILIFF: They got scared, your Honor; they were absolutely scared. When he got away through the window, I ran after him two miles. He'd look around every now and then and threaten: "Just you try—one of you—to come near me, and I'll kill you on the spot!" And, your Honor, I ain't a young man any more; I couldn't manage him; he can carry about two hundred and fifty pounds of meat on his head, you know.

CHIEF OF POLICE: But where the devil is he hiding! . . . It's more than a week since it happened.

BAILIFF: I don't think he's anywhere round here, your Honor; he'd have given himself up long ago. At first I thought he'd set the whole village on fire or do some mischief to some of us; but since everything's all right round here, you can be sure he's skipped to Peter: there are plenty of 'em there without passports. The old woman, his mother-in-law, said he had a thousand rubles in cash: with all that money one can

live quietly anywhere; and here I have to suffer and answer for him! My only hope now is in your kindness—that you'll be merciful and defend me.

LAWYER (*sarcastically*): I haven't much to do here—there's a higher official than myself. So many government puppies are round here now! All the way down here he was explaining to me in the tarantas, how he wants to find out every possible detail here.

BAILIFF: Please let me say a word! . . . It's true that we're only ignorant peasants, but we know enough to understand that this official is just a joke. For two days now he's been going around from one hut to another to see if any of the peasants will say anything against the squire. Sergey Vasilyich also gave me a command: "Kalistrat," says he, "go talk it over with the Chief of Police and the lawyer; but as for that government official, I won't have anything to do with him—he's not worth it."

CHIEF OF POLICE: It's all right for Sergey Vasilyich to point to us; but if anything goes wrong, he'll just wash his hands of it.

LAWYER: Not only wash his hands of it, but he'll be the first to call you scoundrel and grafter to the governor. . . . I've had plenty to do with him.

BAILIFF: Allow me to say, if that's what you think, that Sergey Vasilyich doesn't have to know anything about it. I don't have to report to any other officials or to the squire, or to squeeze out dimes or pennies like other folks. I have a hundred and fifty rubles here now, and you can take 'em. Only I can't divide it between you, fool that I am, but the money's ready. (*He hastily takes out of his pocket a hundred and fifty rubles and puts them on the table.*)

CHIEF OF POLICE: Well, friend, we can't take your money; we haven't done anything yet.

BAILIFF: Oh, that's not for anything in particular—just out of respect for you. . . . I'm giving it to you, and I beg you humbly to accept it and not to turn it down.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Why turn it down—it's good money. (*To the LAWYER.*) Come, take your share.

LAWYER (*continues to write*): I don't know how much you think I ought to get.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Why don't you know? Haven't we always gone halves, like brothers? There's an even seventy-five rubles for you—take 'em.

(*He pushes the money over to the LAWYER, who quickly and silently puts it into his vest pocket and continues to write.*)

CHIEF OF POLICE: You're a good fellow, I must say! (*To the BAILIFF with kindliness.*) Is the squire really ill or just bluffing?

BAILIFF: He's very ill! He has a high fever, they say. . . . When he got excited that time . . . he took to bed. . . . He's getting worse and worse . . . we don't know if he'll live through it.— That scoundrel and cutthroat, think what he's done! (*Noticing a POLICEMAN coming in with a stick in his hand and a badge on his chest.*) What d'you want? Fool! Sticking your nose in!

POLICEMAN: I've brought the people here.

CHIEF OF POLICE (*to the LAWYER*): Let's begin the examination. Why should we wait for *him*?

LAWYER: All right.

BAILIFF: D'you want to begin with old Matrena, your Honor?

CHIEF OF POLICE: Yes, make it Matrena.

BAILIFF (*to the POLICEMAN*): Go and bring in Matrena!

(*POLICEMAN goes out.*)

BAILIFF: About the gossip, your Honor, you don't need to worry. You can see for yourself: I've not only put locks on the mouths of all the older folks, but I've even sent all the little kids twenty miles out of the way so they won't blab anything.

SCENE II

MATRENA *comes in timidly, followed by the POLICEMAN.*

BAILIFF: Come on over nearer! . . . What d'you keep hanging your head for?

(*MATRENA comes nearer.*)

CHIEF OF POLICE: What's your name?

MATRENA (*stares now at the ceiling, now at her feet*): Oh, my dear . . . Lord!

CHIEF OF POLICE (*repeats*): What's your name?

BAILIFF: Matrena, your Honor, just so—write it down, please.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Really?

BAILIFF: Really—d'you think I'd tell you a lie? Why should I?

(*The LAWYER writes.*)

CHIEF OF POLICE: How old are you?

MATRENA (*shivering all over*): Oh, my dear, my dear sirs!

BAILIFF: Come on, you old hag, speak up! Why don't you tell?

MATRENA (*looks at him in fear*): My dear, I, what? . . . Please!

BAILIFF: Write down "old," your Honor. The old stick, she's barely alive, she's awful old; she must be past sixty.

(*The LAWYER writes.*)

CHIEF OF POLICE: What's your faith and do you go to confession and to Holy Communion?

MATRENA (*continues to shiver*): Oh, dear sir, sure I—

CHIEF OF POLICE: Sure what?

MATRENA: Sure, dear sir.

BAILIFF: She does, your Honor: write it down: she goes during Lent and on Assumption Day too. . . . It's a long time she's been getting ready for the grave.

CHIEF OF POLICE (*scratching his head slightly*): Tell me, granny: how came your son-in-law to kill the child?

MATRENA (*begins to shiver still more*): Oh, dear sir, what! . . . Dear Lord!

BAILIFF: Your Honor, she wasn't there; it's the honest truth she wasn't. . . . Tell 'em, you old devil, you weren't there!

MATRENA: I wasn't there, Mr. Bailiff; I wasn't there.

LAWYER (*writes*): If she wasn't there, then that's settled.

SCENE III

The same as before and SHPRINGEL, the official on special service: a young man with a protruding jaw, in an elegant uniform, with long handsome nails and with the general air of an ambitious but rather stupid fellow.

SHPRINGEL (*to the POLICEMAN*): I've brought a peasant! . . . You keep him aside so he shan't meet any one here.

(*Goes over to the table with an air of importance.*)

CHIEF OF POLICE (*somewhat servilely*): You'll kindly excuse us for beginning without you.

SHPRINGEL: Well?

LAWYER (*pushes the papers over to him silently*): Here's the testimony.

SHPRINGEL (*glancing through the papers*): Hm! Doesn't know anything—as usual. Well, woman, I'll make you know something.

MATRENA: Dear sir, O Lord! . . . I'm guilty. (*She bows down to his feet.*)

SHPRINGEL (*kicking her*): Get out! No use bothering with her! Drag her out of here and bring in the murderer's wife. (*He sits down in the president's chair with dignity.*)

BAILIFF (*to POLICEMAN*): Pull her out, fellow; be quick and bring in Lizaveta!

(*POLICEMAN leads MATRENA out.*)

SHPRINGEL (*glancing at the BAILIFF*): What's your business here and what are you doing in the examination room?

BAILIFF (*frightened*): Because—because I brought the people here just now, your Honor.

SHPRINGEL: That's the business of the district police, not yours.
(*In a loud voice.*) Get out!

(*The BAILIFF disappears hastily; as he goes out the POLICEMAN brings in LIZAVETA.*)

SHPRINGEL: Why are you bringing her in in this way? Let her alone.

POLICEMAN: She can't stand up, your Honor; she's been lying around here on the floor all the while.

SHPRINGEL (*in a stern, official tone*): Are you Anany Yakovlich's wife?

LIZAVETA: I am . . . oh, sinner . . . sinner . . . that I am! (*Hangs her head.*)

SHPRINGEL (*still more sternly*): Who is the father of your illegitimate child?

LIZAVETA (*tears her blouse in anguish*): I've lost him, sir, my dear little one; I've lost him! They killed him, took him away from me! (*Hangs her head still lower, tears herself away from the hands of the POLICEMAN and falls down.*)

SHPRINGEL: Hold her up, you fool!

POLICEMAN (*raising her*): Why d'you keep falling down? Stand up at least before the police!

SHPRINGEL: What a hypocrite! Eh?

CHIEF OF POLICE: What do you mean by hypocrite? The woman looks as if she'd lost her mind.

POLICEMAN: At the time her baby was killed, your Honor, she just grabbed him: her hands became stiff. I ran up to her and just tore the baby away from her, and ever since, she keeps moaning that she's a sinner. . . . She must be off her mind a little.

SHPRINGEL: I'll bring her back to her right mind. She'll come to pretty quick for me. I'm not one of those soft fellows, and I know just how this whole business occurred, no matter how they have tried to cover it up. Don't let her go; put her in that chair and call that peasant in from the hall. . . . I'll put some color on her mug, if she's lost all of her own.

POLICEMAN (*takes LIZAVETA aside and looks out of the door*): Hey there, boys, call Nikon! (*He seats LIZAVETA in the chair.*) Now, just sit here. . . . D'you want a drink of water?

(*LIZAVETA looks at him senselessly and begins to sob again.*)

POLICEMAN: Come, come, I won't. Only don't bawl!

SHPRINGEL (*looks at them with fury*): Oh, you rascally peasants! I'll examine all of you and the district police too. The whole district's full of crime and nastiness! Here you've committed a murder and got the murderer out of the way so as to hush up the whole business.

SCENE IV

The same and UNCLE NIKON

UNCLE NIKON (*appears in the doorway and speaks to the peasants outside*): Oh, to the devil with you! I know how to behave to state officials. What do you mean?

(*At this point ZOLOTILOV appears; UNCLE NIKON straightens up.*)

ZOLOTILOV: Permit me, gentlemen, to have a talk with you here. As the district marshal, I think I have some right to do so.

SHPRINGEL: Certainly, sir. (*To UNCLE NIKON.*) Come here! (*The latter comes over nervously.*) Tell us what you told me a few days ago!

UNCLE NIKON: A man must tell God's truth, your Honor! So here I was riding with Anashka. . . . I wasn't so friendly with him. You know, your Honor, what nonsense a drunken man talks.

CHIEF OF POLICE (*shaking his head*): You ought to keep your own eyes open. Just look at your mug, you scoundrel: you're like a scarecrow in the woods!

UNCLE NIKON: That's right, your Honor, I'm a man all gone to seed: maybe I *was* the best mechanic in the whole empire and now I have to bend down to others! . . . I can never do that: hm! wait a while! He must obey *my* command . . . so he didn't like that idea, your Honor. "Here," says he, "is a thousand rubles and fix it up for me!" . . . "But it might be the ruin of me," says I—just think!

SHPRINGEL: Did this gentleman of yours have any relations with Anany's wife?

UNCLE NIKON: Yes, your Honor, that's just what happened: our squire, you know, is a very sly fellow. . . . And our women folk, the only thing you can say about them—pshaw! She's of the chicken breed: you take her under your wing and that's her only strength.—The squire says to me: "Nikasha," says he, "which woman can you recommend me?" . . . "My dear sir," says I, "you just point out any one you wish and you shall have her." . . . That's what I said.

SHPRINGEL (*interrupting*): Is it true that this woman had an illegitimate child?

UNCLE NIKON: There was a bastard, your Honor: but nobody says anything, because the people are spiteful. . . . We're this and we're that, but what are you? We wear whiskers too.—I have a daughter, too, your Honor . . . "How dare you, cat! Scat! Stay in your place!" Just because, your Honor, because I know a certain root . . . As soon as you wind it around anybody, you can't see him. . . . Even if you gave eight thousand rubles, you couldn't see him.

CHIEF OF POLICE (*waving his hand*): The devil only knows what he's talking about!

SHPRINGEL (*to the LAWYER*): Write down his testimony! (*The latter just looks at him.*)

ZOLOTILOV: I think, gentlemen, that this shouldn't be written down, because he's dead drunk and can't stand up straight.

UNCLE NIKON (*assuming an air of dignity*): No, no, please! I'm only a sick man. In the third ward in Moscow I was sick in bed seven months in the hospital; and there, as soon as they brought in one of us fellows, they put him right into water . . . boiling hot . . . and so, my dear Sergey Vasilyich, every man's joints can't help getting weak.

SHPRINGEL: Shut up! This job is getting to be worse than convict labor.

SCENE V

The same and DAVID IVANOV

DAVID IVANOV: Your Honor, I've caught Anany and brought him here.

(SHPRINGEL *jerks his head.*)

CHIEF OF POLICE (*with satisfaction*): Well, praised be the Lord!

ZOLOTILOV (*to DAVID IVANOV, displeased*): Where did you catch him?

DAVID IVANOV: I'm guilty, too, my dear Sergey Vasilyich: I was harrowing on my land when he suddenly appeared from behind Utrobin, out of the forest. "David Ivanov," says he, "are the police looking for me?" "They are," says I. "Take me to them," says he, "bind me, or take me as I am." "Why should I bind you?" says I.

SHPRINGEL: Who's been harboring him here?

DAVID IVANOV: We didn't talk about it, your Honor. I walked at a distance from him all the time. . . . It was dangerous: a man in such despair might do something rash.

SHPRINGEL (*to POLICEMAN*): Go bring him in!

POLICEMAN: How can I leave her here, your Honor? She keeps toppling over; she has to be held up a bit.

SHPRINGEL (*screaming*): Let her go to thunder, you fool!

CHIEF OF POLICE (*rising*): The bailiff can bring him in. (*Goes over to the door.*) Tell Kalistrat to bring in Anany.

SHPRINGEL: With chains on his hands and feet!

CHIEF OF POLICE (*repeating*): Chained!

A VOICE OUTSIDE: All right, your Honor.

SHPRINGEL (*to the LAWYER*): What are you doing?

LAWYER: I'm writing, but what the business is—I don't know.

ZOLOTILOV (*rising*): I repeat, gentlemen, that you have no business to write this down. If you do I shall make a separate report.

SHPRINGEL: I don't need your report at all.

ZOLOTILOV: Then I shall be obliged to ask you to take it. If it were merely a question of some lost horse or cow, you could do as you please, legally or illegally; but when it concerns the nobility, whom I have the honor to serve, I shall always have my say. Chief of Police, you are our elected officer: therefore will you not kindly give us your opinion?

CHIEF OF POLICE (*frightened*): Of course, we ought not to examine drunken people.

ZOLOTILOV: And besides, gentlemen, pray understand: the point is that you are putting a drunken peasant on the same level with a nobleman, who, I venture to remark, has an untarnished reputation in the district.

SHPRINGEL (*interrupting him*): I serve the government and not the nobility; and in any case I must ask you to stop disputing, since the murderer is found.

SCENE VI

The same. ANANY YAKOVLICH appears with chained hands and feet. The expression on his face is that of exhaustion and suffering.

A throng of peasants, both men and women, gathers at the door.

ONE OF THE WOMEN: Oh, how thin and shabby he looks!

PEASANT: He came of his own accord—what d'you think of that?

(ANANY YAKOVLICH goes over to the table. The BAILIFF stands at a distance.)

SHPRINGEL (*scrutinizes ANANY*): A fine fellow! He can stand a thousand lashes. (*To the CHIEF OF POLICE.*) Examine him!

CHIEF OF POLICE: How old are you?

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Thirty-six.

(LIZAVETA begins to sob when she hears her husband's voice. ANANY YAKOVLICH shudders.)

POLICEMAN (*trying to calm her*): Come now, come!

CHIEF OF POLICE (*to ANANY YAKOVLICH*): To what faith do you belong and do you go to confession and Holy Communion?

ANANY YAKOVLICH: I belong to the faith of the Church and I used to take the Holy Sacrament even in Peter every year.

(LIZAVETA begins to sob still harder and straightens up.)

POLICEMAN (*to LIZAVETA*): Don't, please! Don't bawl, or they'll give him a harsher punishment.

ANANY YAKOVLICH (*grows pale and speaks in a weak voice*): Please, your Honor, tell 'em to take the poor woman away from here: I just can't stand it.

SHPRINGEL (*looks at him in a rage*): No, I won't do it; I'll keep her here on purpose, so that you may feel it more deeply and speak the truth.

(ANANY YAKOVLICH *merely droops his head.*)

SHPRINGEL: Where have you been all this time?

ANANY YAKOVLICH: In the forest in one of the clearings.

SHPRINGEL (*with an air of importance*): So I suppose. Who brought food to you out there?

ANANY YAKOVLICH: I didn't care about food, and who could've brought it to me? The first day my throat went dry, so I drank water; and after a while . . . it seems that human flesh is weak . . . it gets the best of a man. . . . I couldn't hold out . . . I went out on the road: I saw a woman who was riding to work and I bought a hunk of bread from her and that's all I've lived on.

SHPRINGEL: Why did you give yourself up then? You could have stayed in the wilderness and lived on locusts.

ANANY YAKOVLICH: I didn't go to look for life there, sir, I sought death.—Perhaps wild beasts would tear me to pieces, I thought. . . . One can run away and hide himself from human judgment, but never from that of God!

SHPRINGEL: Hm! What a philosopher! But for how long and with whom did your wife have an affair?

(ANANY YAKOVLICH *is silent.*)

SHPRINGEL: With the squire, perhaps?

ANANY YAKOVLICH (*blushes and lowers his eyes*): I know nothing about it, sir. . . . And besides, it doesn't concern this business.

SHPRINGEL: Oh, it doesn't concern it! Why did you kill the child then?

ANANY YAKOVLICH (*lowers his head still more*): I killed it . . . because I was beside myself.

SHPRINGEL: And just why were you beside yourself?

ANANY YAKOVLICH (*sighing heavily*): Because I was an accursed man from early childhood, I suppose: I'd burst into anger at the least little thing and couldn't control myself. I feel and understand all this now, as if hell had opened up before me on all sides.

SHPRINGEL: You're thinking of hell and are lying at the same time. Look at the image and repeat what you've said!

(ANANY YAKOVLICH *lowers his eyes.*)

SHPRINGEL: Come on, look! Oh, you scoundrel, you villain! You

have no God and no conscience! (*To UNCLE NIKON.*) Come on and expose him!

UNCLE NIKON: Why should I expose him, your Honor? What's the use? They don't mind us old folks very much. . . . You try to set them right: "Do so and so, fellow," . . . and they just bark at you. . . . I myself am a native of Peter, your Honor; I was a better man than he is. It's hard for me to stand it from them—just think of it! (*Weeps.*)

SHPRINGEL: You said his wife had an affair with the squire?

UNCLE NIKON: Ain't it so? There she is herself, your Honor, sitting there. . . . Why don't you talk? Speak up, you she-devil! . . . I've no reason to shield you! . . . I haven't had much vodka from them, your Honor. . . . I drink my own—I sure do! There he came from Peter . . . he just gave me a half pint and that's all.

(*LIZAVETA begins to sob again. The POLICEMAN shuts her mouth.*)

SHPRINGEL: Oh, the devil, how she yells! Get her out of here!

POLICEMAN (*leading out LIZAVETA*): Come on! What a sort you are!

(*ANANY YAKOVLICH gazes after his wife with intense feeling.*)

SHPRINGEL (*to ANANY YAKOVLICH, pointing at UNCLE NIKON*): Well! answer him!

ANANY YAKOVLICH: I've nothing to answer him, sir; let him chatter as he pleases. I know only one thing, that my sins have come home to me and concern nobody else.

ZOLOTILOV: Won't you kindly write down those words, gentlemen?

SHPRINGEL: No, we won't, because I know other participants. (*Pointing at the BAILIFF.*) There is one right here! (*Pounding on the table.*) You dirty mug, this is the last day you are not in chains, and your only salvation is to speak the whole truth.

BAILIFF (*growing pale*): I've no reason to lie, your Honor; it's not my business! . . . I tell you as I would tell God himself that I know nothing about this whole business.

SHPRINGEL (*rises and goes over to him*): Oh, you don't know; don't you?

BAILIFF (*retreating*): Exactly so, your Honor!

SHPRINGEL: You don't know, you dirty ruffian! (*Grabs hold of his beard and pulls it.*) You don't know how you came to him with the peasants and tried to take away his wife by force!

BAILIFF (*getting down on his knees*): That's what I'm guilty of, your Honor. . . . We're under orders, you know; and we have to do whatever we're told.

SHPRINGEL: So you did go to him?

BAILIFF: Consider, your Honor; the squire gave orders that he

shouldn't abuse his wife and he meanwhile beat and tortured her. . . . And so, thanks to my cursed office of bailiff, I had to stop him.

(*ZOLOTILOV threatens the BAILIFF with his fist.*)

SHPRINGEL (*to ANANY YAKOVLICH*): How is it you say that no one had anything to do with your case?

ANANY YAKOVLICH (*looks disdainfully at the BAILIFF*): If the man wants to speak against himself, let him; but I don't remember anything about it and don't want to.

SHPRINGEL (*shrugging his shoulders*): Oh, what a fool, what a fool!

BAILIFF (*rising*): Your Honor, now you're beating and punishing me for nothing at all. . . . Willy-nilly a man'll say things that never happened.

SHPRINGEL (*turning to him*): Again "never happened"—eh? . . . If that's the case, bring the policeman. . . . Bring in the whole lot of them.

(*The POLICEMAN appears.*)

SHPRINGEL (*pointing to the BAILIFF*): Put handcuffs on him immediately and lock him up in the cooler.

POLICEMAN: We haven't any more handcuffs, your Honor.

SHPRINGEL (*pounding him*): You devil you, get 'em somewhere and chain him!

POLICEMAN (*frightened*): Come on!

BAILIFF: Even if you let them burn me on a fire, your Honor, I'm not guilty of anything at all.

SHPRINGEL (*striking his own chest*): Go, I'm telling you, before I kill you on the spot!

(*The POLICEMAN leads out the BAILIFF.*)

SCENE VII

The same, without LIZAVETA, POLICEMAN and BAILIFF

SHPRINGEL (*walks up and down the room for some time in excitement and then speaks to ANANY YAKOVLICH*): Oh, you fool, you perfect fool! Don't you know, you stupid pie-face, if you testify that your wife had an illegitimate child your sentence would be lightened? Instead of putting you under the whip, you knave, we might just send you to a penitentiary.

ANANY YAKOVLICH: All this I know very well, sir, but I have feelings of my own. Even if she did do something worse to me than I ever dreamed of, it's not for me to be her judge or testify against her: my sin is greater than any of hers and I don't want to make my sentence a bit lighter. Only God help me to bear it with patience; I'm even

ready to go through deadly tortures, if so I may gain just a little forgiveness for my great transgression!

SHPRINGEL: No, you don't want to serve God but the devil himself, because you're bribed.

ANANY YAKOVLICH (*smiling bitterly*): There's no reason, sir, why I should take bribes now: I have five hundred rubles here that I earned with my own sweat and you can have 'em. (*Takes out the money and puts it on the table.*) And because I'm not allowed to talk to any one any more, I wish to have the priest get the money. He knows my case and so let him do what he wants with it; he can use 'em for services for the dead child, or accept 'em for the church, or distribute 'em among my relatives—my family. It's his affair what to do with it; I don't need it any more.

SHPRINGEL: Oh, how devout you are! Oh, these damned peasants! You've killed a man and you think God will forgive you if you light a fatter candle in memory of his soul. No, he'd forgive you sooner if you told the truth.

ZOLOTILOV: What more truth can he tell you? You beat people and put them in chains, forcing them to give you partial testimony: you promise the criminal a lighter sentence if only he denounce some one else. (*To the LAWYER and the CHIEF OF POLICE.*) Will you not draw up a special report about this, gentlemen?

SHPRINGEL (*rising and taking his cap*): Do whatever you like! I'm not afraid of anything and I'm going straight to the governor, because there is collusion here, both of the peasants and of the officials. Let them send here any one they like! (*He goes out.*)

CHIEF OF POLICE: What a fool! Now he'll go and tell stories and that's the end of us.

ZOLOTILOV: Nothing of the sort will happen. I will go to the governor myself and will explain things to him. . . . You can't give over a nobleman, bound hand and foot, to any young puppy!

CHIEF OF POLICE: Of course not.

SCENE VIII

The same, without SHPRINGEL

(*The POLICEMAN comes in.*)

POLICEMAN: Your Honor, the governor's official has given strict orders to put Anany Yakovlich in prison immediately and keep him under strict watch.

(*All cast their eyes to the floor. ANANY YAKOVLICH turns somewhat pale. In the meantime peasants, both men and women, gather*

in the room; among them MATRENA, leading LIZAVETA and supporting her by the arm.)

CHIEF OF POLICE: And how about the bailiff? Him too?

POLICEMAN: He's pardoned the bailiff, your Honor. . . . The man must've made about fifteen low bows to him. . . . "If the authorities ask me now," says he, "I'll tell 'em the whole story."

CHIEF OF POLICE: Hm! well then, bring up the cart and horses. *(To ANANY YAKOVLICH.)* You just get ready to go, friend; you can't help it.

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Allow me to make a bow to the people, your Honor.

CHIEF OF POLICE: Go ahead.

ANANY YAKOVLICH *(bows)*: Forgive me, Christian people! *(Begins to exchange kisses with everybody, first of all with the BAILIFF and then with the other peasants.)*

DAVID IVANOV: Good-by, Anany Yakovlich! . . . I'm sorry, friend, that I brought you here; you asked me to do it.

UNCLE NIKON *(weeping bitterly)*: We'll all be there, Anasha; all—every one of us.

(ANANY YAKOVLICH goes over to his wife and her mother. The former throws herself into his arms. He kisses her head. She falls and embraces his feet.)

ANANY YAKOVLICH: Just take her away. *(Then, saying good-by to MATRENA)* Good-by! . . . Bless me, if you're not angry with me. *(MATRENA makes the sign of the cross over him. He speaks to the people again.)* Once more I bow down to the earth before you: don't think badly of me, wretch that I am, and pray for my sinful soul!

(He goes out; all see him off. MATRENA and the other women begin to wail: "Our beloved is departing, our fair sun is leaving us!")

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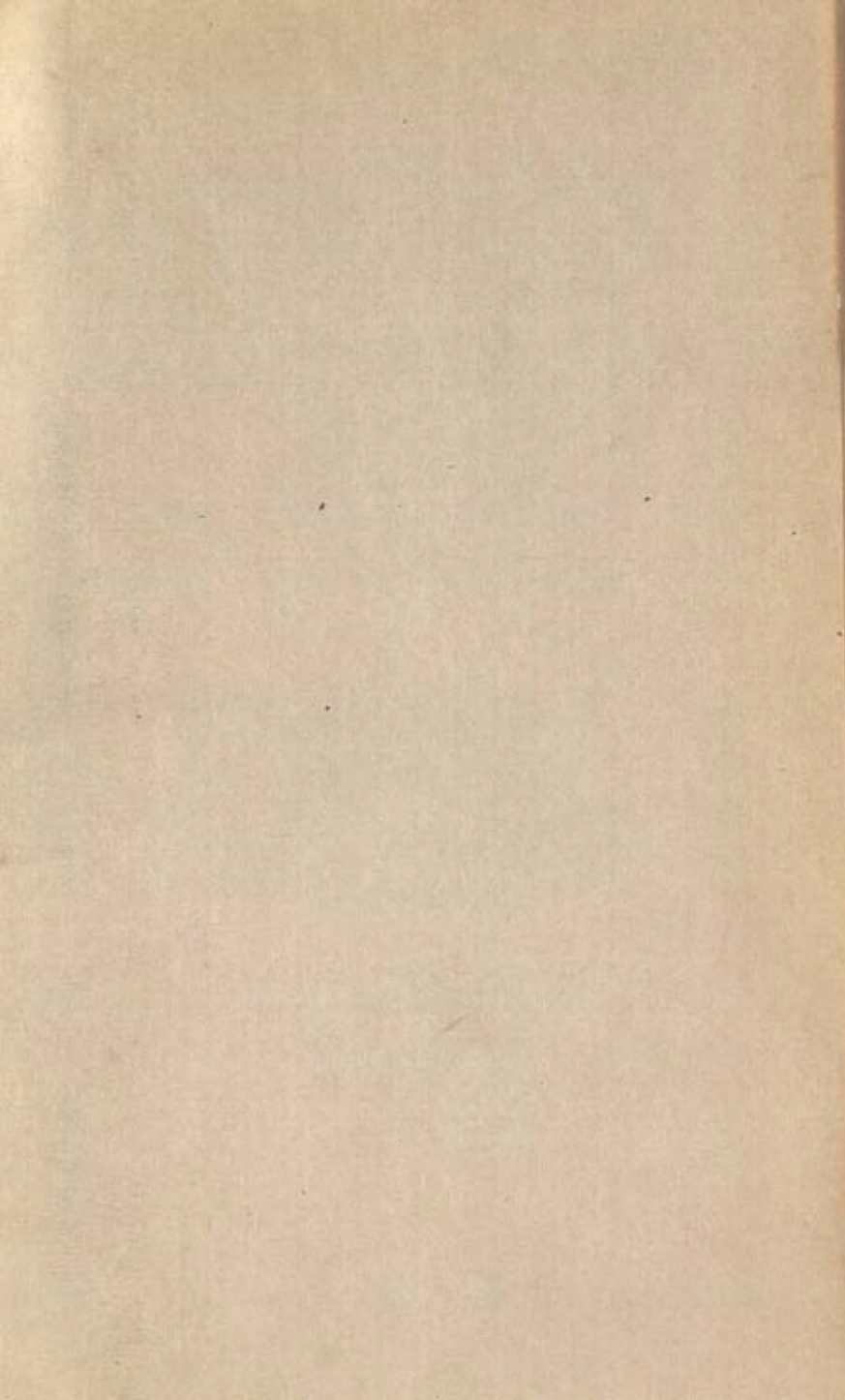
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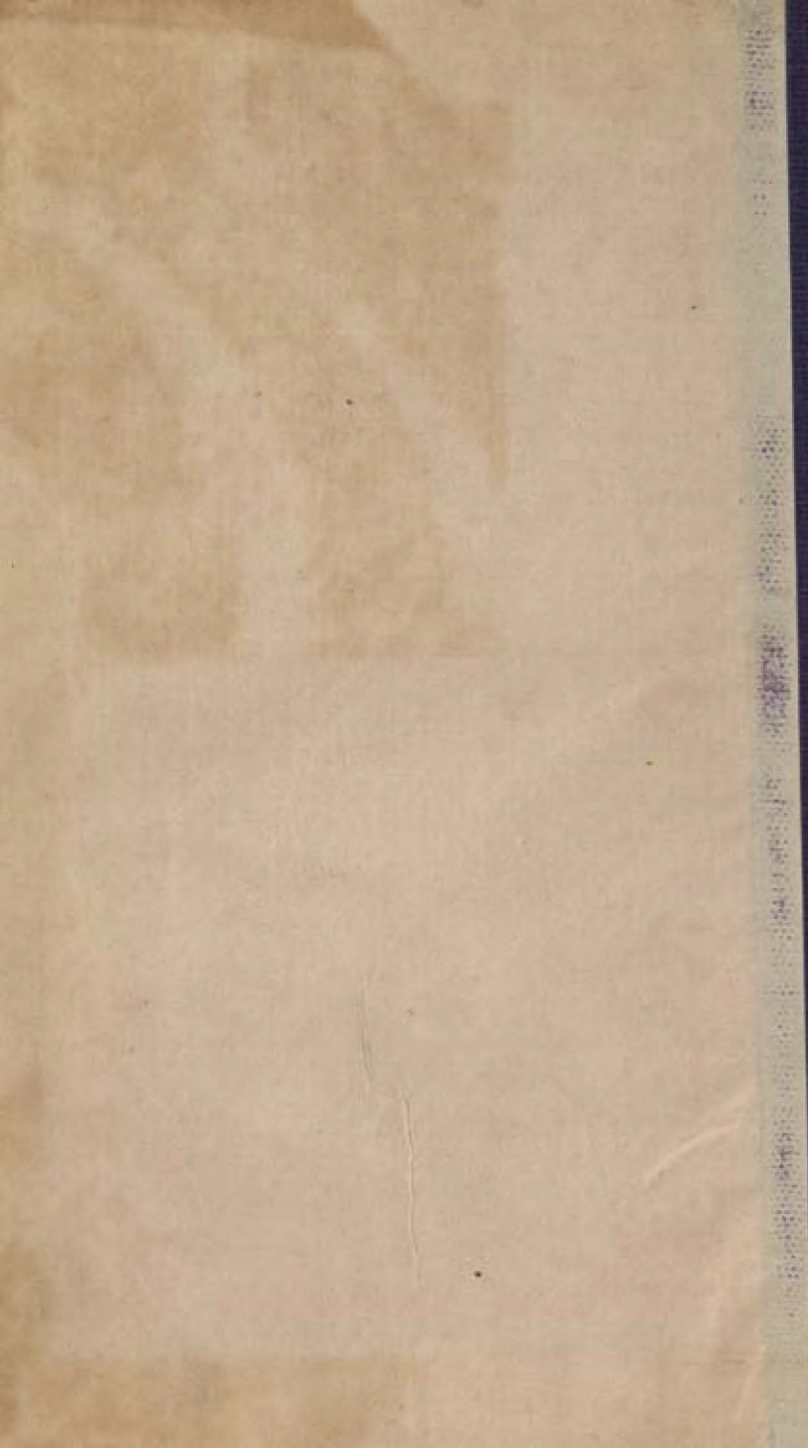
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